

THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR



"A people who can understand and act upon the counsels which God has given it, in the past events of its history, is safe in the most dangerous crises of its fate."—*M. Guizot.*

"As to holding Afghanistan, it would be folly equalling that of the attempt to conquer it."—*Sir Charles Napier.*

"The troops would force their way through a wild, disunited people, only to find the commencement of their difficulties."—*The Duke of Wellington on the Invasion of Afghanistan.*

"Fortresses so much in advance of the main territories and strength of a country, add neither to the offensive nor defensive powers of a state, but compromise a certain portion of its strength in men and means by isolating them at vast distances from support in the midst of a hostile people."—*General Sir Henry Durand, Royal Engineers.*

"After an enormous waste of blood and treasure, we left every town and village of Afghanistan bristling with our enemies. Before the British army crossed the Indus, the English name had been honoured in Afghanistan. Some dim traditions of the splendour of Mr. E. Elphinstone's mission had been all the Afghans associated with their thoughts of the English nation; but, in their place, we left galling memories of the progress of a desolating army."—*Kaye's History of the First Afghan War.*

"Content with the limits nature appears to have assigned to its Empire, the Government of India will devote all its efforts to the establishment and maintenance of general peace, to the protection of the Sovereigns and Chiefs its allies, and to the prosperity and happiness of its own faithful subjects. The enormous expenditure required for the support of a large force, in a false military position, at a distance from its own frontier and its resources, will no longer arrest every measure for the improvement of the country and of the people."—*Proclamation of the Governor-General of India, 1st of October, 1842, on the withdrawal from Afghanistan.*

# THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

1878-79-80

ITS CAUSES, ITS CONDUCT, AND  
ITS CONSEQUENCES

BY

COLONEL H. B. HANNA

During the last part of the War on Army Head-Quarters Staff  
in charge of all matters connected with the campaign

Late Commanding at Delhi

Author of "Indian Problems," "Defence of India," etc.

WITH NINE MAPS

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\* *Note.*—As both Actions were fought near Charasiab they are shown in the same Map.  
See page, 286 for Second Action.

## CHAPTER I

### The March of Death

THE summer of the year 1879 was a season of suffering for the people of India. In the south there was famine, due to a failure of the spring crops, and further north, where Nature had shown herself more bountiful, the poverty of the peasant denied him the enjoyment of her gifts, even the necessaries of life often exceeding his purchasing powers. But it was in the Punjab that the burden of the moment was heaviest and the outlook least hopeful. Lying nearest to Afghanistan, that province had contributed far more than its share of the labour and transport which had been used up on the three lines of advance, and with the troops still beyond the frontier, and still needing to be fed and kept supplied with the carriage, without which there could be no withdrawal when the word to withdraw should be given, the demands on its resources were nearly as constant and as exacting as during the continuance of hostilities. Agriculture languished under the scarcity of labour, and trade was carried on with difficulty in a country from which animal transport had almost disappeared, and where railways continued to be diverted from their normal uses to the service of the military authorities.

There were other troubles besides those flowing directly from the war. The winter rains had failed and the spring showers saved only a portion of the crops. The season was a sickly one for man and beast.<sup>1</sup> An outbreak of foot and mouth disease swept away thirty

<sup>1</sup> "The death-rate in this Province was higher during the year under review than during any previous year since the introduction of registration in 1868. In

thousand head of cattle in the Rawal Pindi district alone, and fever and dysentery, rife in every village, had long been preparing the way for cholera, whose advent might safely be predicted since the press of pilgrims to Hurdwar was unusually great—no less than six hundred thousand men, women, and children being gathered together at one time to bathe in the waters of the Ganges, where they issue from the hills, and to take part in the great fair, known as the Kumbh Mela, which is held every twelfth year in that sacred spot.<sup>1</sup> The first case of cholera occurred on the 24th of March and by the end of April the returning multitude had carried the disease to every corner of the province.<sup>2</sup> About the middle of May, it spread from the civil population to the garrison of Peshawar, and the European troops were hurriedly moved out into camp.<sup>3</sup> As a rule, one or two removals stay the plague, but on this occasion no good results were obtained, nor could they have been looked for because, for military and political reasons, the sites chosen for the camps were near cantonments, the furthest not more than six miles away. The disease was of the most virulent type, so fatal that, out of a hundred and seventy-one Europeans admitted into hospital between May and July, a hundred and twenty-one died.

The Government of India had watched the spread of the epidemic with ever deepening anxiety, and on the 16th of May a Conference, presided over by Lord Lytton, assembled at Simla to consider a plan of withdrawing the large body of troops belonging to the First and Second Divisions of the Peshawar Valley Field Force, whom peace

1877 the death-rate was 20 per 1,000, and the mean of the previous six years 23; in 1878 it was 36, and in 1879 it was 38, or nearly double the ratio for 1877." (*Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India for 1879-80*, p. 75.)

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Sanitary Measures in India in 1879-80*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> In 1878, there were only 215 deaths in the Punjab from cholera; whereas, in 1879, 26,135 deaths were registered. (*Ibid.* p. 77.)

<sup>3</sup> The Peshawar garrison consisted of one Battery of Artillery, a Battalion of British Infantry, two Bengal Cavalry and two Bengal Infantry regiments.

would set free to return to India, by the Kabul River route, to Michni, and marching them thence to their respective stations along the high and comparatively healthy left bank of that stream, thus avoiding the Khyber Pass and the Peshawar Valley.<sup>1</sup> Considerations of health were all in favour of this route, but these were balanced by military and political disadvantages. The transference of the supplies stored in the Khyber to new depôts must be a work of time and difficulty, and as the returning troops would probably come into collision with tribes so far neutral, every such depôt would need to be fortified and strongly guarded. In the end, the conference, unable to come to a decision, adjourned *sine die*, to be succeeded by a purely Medical Committee, appointed, not to choose between alternative routes but between bringing back the bulk of Browne's and Maude's Forces in the teeth of the cholera, which had already laid its deadly hand on Ali Masjid and other points on the line of communications,<sup>2</sup> or leaving them in their present positions till the disease should disappear with the passing of the hot weather. The three members of this Committee—Surgeon-General J. H. Ker Innes, Surgeon-Major J. L. Brydon, and Surgeon-Major J. A. Marston, Secretary to the Surgeon-General—were unanimously of opinion that as the troops, except those at Gandamak<sup>3</sup> where conditions were more favourable to

<sup>1</sup> The medical officers consulted by this Conference were Surgeon-General Ker Innes and Surgeon-Major J. M. Cunningham.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Surgeon-General J. Hanbury, Principal Medical Officer of General Maude's Division, adopted stringent measures to arrest the advance of the disease into the Khyber Pass. Cholera camps and examining posts were established at Jamrud and Ali Masjid, and all troops and camp-followers were examined on their arrival and departure. Notwithstanding these precautions, before the Committee met, seventeen cases of cholera, of which twelve proved fatal, had occurred among the coolies employed by the Engineers at Ali Masjid, and two coolies had been attacked at Jellalabad, one of whom died.—Hanbury's Report.

<sup>3</sup> There was much sickness among the troops at Gandamak, but this was due, not to the place, but to the reaction following on a long and arduous campaign.—H. B. H.

health, would be equally a source of anxiety whether they remained in Afghanistan or returned to India, the sanitary reason in favour of the former course did not outweigh the political and financial reasons which they understood to press for immediate withdrawal.

There was much independent medical opinion on the other side, and many senior officers, amongst them General Macpherson and General C. Gough, condemned withdrawal, both on sanitary and political grounds;<sup>1</sup> but the Committee's views fell in, no less with Lord Lytton's desire to give immediate relief to India's overstrained finances, than with the wishes of the great majority of the officers and men concerned, who, in their eagerness to get back to India, gave no thought to the terrors of the road that lay before them, to the murderous heat of the sandy wastes and stifling ravines, to the intolerable suffering from thirst, to the deadly disease sweeping up the passes to meet them.

The order for the retirement by the Khyber line was issued by the Commander-in-Chief, under instructions from the Government, on the 31st of May. Lundi Kotal, Ali Masjid, and Jamrud alone were to be retained, and the following troops were allotted as their garrisons :—

LUNDI KOTAL.

*Artillery.*

11-9 Royal Artillery.

No. 4 Mountain Battery.

<sup>1</sup> "There is great talk of sending the troops back to the Punjab if peace is concluded—a most insane idea, I think, and one that if carried out, would probably cause great loss of life." (General Macpherson's Diary, May 11, 1879.)

Gough, who, on two or three occasions, discussed the question with Cavagnari, not only represented the risk attending a march at such an unseasonable time, but also the impolicy of withdrawing from Gandamak until things had settled down at Kabul, where they were still in a very disturbed state. To these objections Cavagnari replied that, having made the Treaty, we were bound to carry it out fully and without delay, and that there was no need to take any steps to ensure its fulfilment by the Afghans.—H. B. H.

## THE MARCH OF DEATH

5

### *Cavalry.*

2 Squadrons 10th Bengal Lancers.

### *British Infantry.*

1st Battalion 12th Foot.

1st     "     17th     "

24th Bengal Infantry.

45th     "     "

### JAMRUD.

1 Squadron 10th Bengal Lancers.

2 Companies Bengal Infantry.

The first step in the process of evacuation—the removal of six thousand camel loads of Government property from Jellalabad to Lundi Kotal—was quickly taken, stores of every description being placed on rafts, constructed by Major H. F. Blair out of lumber and inflated bullock skins, or light pontoon casks, and floated down the stretch of river lying between the two places; the same method of transport being used later for the conveyance of the sick.

The 25th King's Own Borderers, belonging to Maude's Division, was the first European regiment to re-enter India. On the 30th of May it left Dakka for Peshawar, where it was at once attacked by cholera and sent into camp. All Native regiments marched separately, but the European troops of the First Division were grouped in five sections, each from six to seven hundred strong, in charge of an experienced medical officer:—

### *1st Section.*

Brigadier-General C. Gough commanding.

I-C Royal Artillery.

10th Hussars.

Surgeon-Major H. Cornish in medical charge.

### *2nd Section.*

Brigadier-General Macpherson commanding.

13-9 Royal Artillery.

4th Battalion Rifle Brigade.

Surgeon-Major J. F. Supple in medical charge.



## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

*3rd Section.*

Lieutenant-Colonel S. A. Madden commanding.  
E-C Royal Artillery (2 Divisions).  
51st Foot.  
Surgeon-Major G. J. H. Evatt in medical charge.

*4th Section.*

Major W. D. Thompson commanding.  
1st Battalion 17th Foot.  
Surgeon-Major J. E. Fishbourne in medical charge.

*5th Section.*

Lieutenant-Colonel T. Rowland commanding.  
E-3 Royal Artillery.  
5th Fusiliers.  
Surgeon-Major A. H. Ratigan in medical charge.

This last section was drawn from Jellalabad and its outposts.

The troops at Gandamak began to move at the beginning of June, and on the 9th the rear-guard, consisting of the Hazara Mountain Battery, Guides Cavalry, 27th Punjab Infantry, and 45th Sikhs, commanded by Brigadier-General Tytler, rolled up the Field telegraph, handed over the defensive works erected by the British forces to an official of the Amir's, and marched for Lundi Kotal, where it arrived on the 16th, having been detained a day or two at Jellalabad by the congested state of the traffic.<sup>1</sup> Sir S. Browne, who with his staff had started for India as soon as he had seen the main body of his Division under weigh, could take no formal leave of his scattered Force, but in a Report he brought the general good conduct of his men and the services rendered by many of his officers to the notice of the Government, and stayed a week in Peshawar—from the 15th to the 22nd of June—rendering all the help he could to those on whom the care for his late troops had now devolved. His own services

<sup>1</sup> Tytler on arriving at Lundi Kotal was desired to assume command of all the troops in the Khyber, but, falling sick, was succeeded by Gough.—H. B. H.

were rewarded by a disappointment. Certainly, when he accepted the command of the First Division of the Peshawar Valley Field Force, he did not suspect that this compliance was to carry with it the loss of the position of Military Member on the Viceroy's Council, to which he had so recently been appointed; but his independence of character, and the divergence between his views on many military and frontier questions and those of Lord Lytton, a divergence which had disclosed itself in the few weeks of his tenure of office, had rendered him a *persona ingrata* at Simla, and at the close of the campaign he had to content himself with the temporary command of the Lahore District vacant by the continued absence of Sir Donald Stewart. Meanwhile, Cavagnari who had accompanied him through the Khyber, had gone straight up to Simla to report on the political situation created by the treaty, and to receive the reward of his success in overcoming Yakub Khan's unwillingness to accept the British terms, in his own appointment to the post of Resident at Kabul, to which city the Amir had returned in a mood between joy at the departure of the invaders of his country, and fear of the troubles that his unruly subjects might be preparing for him, and for the Englishman whom he had pledged himself to receive and protect.

Travelling rapidly and in comparative ease between Jellalabad and Lundi Kotal—they had made use of Major Blair's rafts—Browne and his Staff had passed unscathed through the infected area: not so the troops who followed in their steps; for them the march was protracted and full of horror. The temperature by day ranged from 110° to 118° Fahr. in the shade; the nights were so hot that sleep was impossible; there were constant dust storms and swarms of flies; water was scarce and generally bad. Surgeon-General Ker Innes's Report gives a graphic picture of the state to which the miseries of this terrible march had reduced both officers and men. "Their clothes were stiff from profuse perspiration and dust. Their countenances betokened great nervous exhaustion, combined with

a wild expression difficult to describe. The eyes injected and even sunken; a burning skin, black with the effects of sun and dirt; a dry tongue, a weak voice, a thirst which no amount of fluids seemed to relieve. Many of the men staggered, rather than marched into their tents, and threw themselves down utterly incapable of further exertion until refreshed by sleep and food." Men thus weakened and dispirited fell an easy prey to disease of every kind. Those struck down on the line of march, suffered tortures in the rough bullock carts which carried them slowly forward to the nearest temporary hospital. At each camping-ground, every regiment and corps left its toll of dead. The Rifle Brigade lost two officers and forty-six men of cholera, besides six men of sunstroke. The 10th Hussars, numerically much weaker, lost thirty-four men. Deputy Surgeon-General J. A. Hanbury had to report, on the arrival of the 17th Foot at Lundi Kotal, that every officer and soldier in the regiment was more or less sick.

Bad as things were, they would have been far worse if the Tribesmen had followed their usual custom of harassing a retiring foe. Luckily, they kept unexpectedly quiet—an attack on the baggage of the 9th Lancers near Jamrud, and the murder of two grass-cutters in the neighbourhood of Lundi Kotal, being the only outrages committed by them—and once within British territory military precautions could be relaxed. As regards disease, matters were no better on one side of the frontier than on the other. Peshawar was a charnel house. All the hospitals were full of patients. On the parade ground there was a large cholera camp; quarters were allotted to sick combatant officers and a large bungalow set apart for sick medical officers, of whom there were, at one time, no fewer than twelve.<sup>1</sup> A picket

<sup>1</sup> "The doctors died and were invalided freely. Kelsall sleeps at Dakka; Wallace, whom all described as a fine type of soldier-surgeon, lies at Lundi Kotal; Grey died at Peshawar of cholera; Wright, who was with the Rifle Brigade and was a singularly sweet, nice fellow, died at Attock of exposure,

was posted on the Jamrud road to keep the convoys of sick that were continually pouring along it, out of cantonments ; yet, on one occasion, a member of General Ross's Staff was called up in the middle of the night to find a cart filled with corpses at his door. It had started from Jamrud with a number of sick men, in charge of four soldiers, and all, but one man of the escort, had died on the way.

The mass of business arising out of the influx of a large body of cholera-stricken troops into the Peshawar District, was enormous, and Brigadier-General C. C. Ross in command had only his District Staff, consisting of one officer of the Adjutant-General's Department, Major W. J. Boyes ; one of the Quartermaster-General's Department, Major H. B. Hanna ; one medical officer, Surgeon-Major J. H. Porter ; and one Commissariat officer, Major S. A. T. Judge, to help him in coping with it ; for, in an acute fit of economy, the Government had disestablished the Divisional and Brigade Staffs of each Division on its arrival at Ali Masjid, and ordered the officers composing them to rejoin their regiments, or to resume their former appointments.

Ross and his assistants had their time already fully taken up by the supervision of the camps to which the cholera patients of the Peshawar garrison had been removed, when thus suddenly called upon to discharge duties which more than doubled their work. Had the troops, day by day streaming out of the Khyber, been free from disease, it would still have taxed their powers to the uttermost to

whilst getting his sick across the then unbridged river ; and Dr. Gibbons, worn out by the campaign and the anxieties of the return march, survived one year and died in England, a broken man from the day he left the Khyber." (*Personal Recollections of the Afghan Campaign*, by Surgeon-Major J. H. Evatt.)

Surgeon-Major J. H. Porter reported that most of the medical officers on their arrival at Hari Singh-ke Burg, were in a painfully helpless and prostrate condition, owing to the constant strain and incessant work, night and day, to which they had been subjected, coupled with the anxiety and depression caused by so much disease, misery, and responsibility. There could be no relief from toil, for, as one comrade after another fell ill or died, the duties falling on those who remained at their posts doubled and trebled.—Porter's Report.

arrange for the march of the various regiments to their different destinations and to meet the demands of the staff officers who crowded into Peshawar, clamouring to be sent on at once to their respective stations, demands with which, in the absence of a railway, and with only a limited number of mail carts available, it was often impossible to comply ; but the strain was rendered far greater by the miserable condition of the men thus suddenly thrown on their hands. Fortunately, Ross was singularly well fitted to face a crisis. Calm, courageous, even-tempered, of great practical ability and excellent common sense, he met every difficulty as it arose with energy and resolution, and his example instilled confidence and strength into all his subordinates.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, too, the Commissioner and Deputy-Commissioner of the District, Mr. D. Macnabb and Mr. H. B. Beckett, were men of the same stamp. Ever ready to accept responsibility and prompt in devising measures to relieve suffering, they seconded the efforts of the military authorities with unfailing zeal and tact. In every camping-ground they caused well-thatched shelters to be erected and stocked them with ordinary supplies and, as far as possible, with the comforts of which men worn out with sickness and fatigue stood so much in need. They organized sanitary staffs to keep the camps clean and look after their water supply, and, last but not least, Mr. Macnabb, with the General's concurrence, kept open the bridge over the Indus at Attock to a much later date than was usually

<sup>1</sup> As the work performed by the author, who had just returned from Kandahar, during this epidemic was the most arduous and the best during his 32 years of service, perhaps he will not be considered egotistical if he quotes the district order issued by General Ross on the 10th July, 1879 :—

No. 377. "Major Hanna, A.Q.M. General, having been relieved of his duties in the District, Brigadier-General Ross desires to thank him for the great energy and intelligence with which he has performed them, especially during the march through the Peshawar District of the large body of troops returning from Afghanistan, stricken with cholera and in the middle of the hot season ; circumstances requiring no little zeal and energy in the Quartermaster-General's Department ; and the Brigadier-General is of opinion that Major Hanna has shown these qualities in an eminent degree."



considered safe, thus sparing the leading batteries and regiments the delay, exposure, and danger attendant on crossing a broad and rapidly rising river in clumsy flat-bottomed boats.

This march of death extended over a period of five weeks, from the end of May to the beginning of July, and during that time there were three hundred and fifty-four deaths from cholera among the European troops.<sup>1</sup> Their Native comrades suffered less severely, yet, even in their ranks, the mortality was heavy, and numbers of camp-followers fell victims to the disease.

Cholera was already on the decline in the Peshawar District before it showed itself in the Kuram. Beginning among the camp-followers at Thal, it spread up the valley from village to village. Still, among the troops, it never assumed the proportions of an epidemic, and only one civil officer, Mr. D. B. Sinclair, C.S., Political Officer, died of it. There were in all twenty-one deaths among European and a like number among Native soldiers; the ratio per thousand being 7·03 for the former and 6·04 for the latter. But if the outbreak of cholera in the Kuram was comparatively slight, enteric and intermittent fevers, dysentery, liver complaints, and, among the Native soldiers, lung diseases of all kinds were steadily at work, diminishing the numbers and sapping the efficiency of the troops occupying India's newly acquired province.

Crossing the desert in the first day of June, the cholera swept rapidly up General Stewart's long line of communications. At Kandahar, the outbreaks were, at first, of a sporadic nature. About the middle of June, the disease showed itself in the citadel where it carried off a few camp-followers; next, two cases occurred in cantonments on the side furthest from the city; only on the 1st of July, when several European soldiers sickened simultaneously, did it declare

<sup>1</sup> "The mortality which resulted from cholera alone equalled 74 per 1,000."  
(*Sanitary Measures in India*, 1879-80, p. 52.)



itself as an epidemic. The usual remedial measure of moving the troops on to fresh ground was promptly adopted. Some regiments pitched their tents in the shady gardens south of cantonments; others went westward to the banks of the Argandab; others again encamped eastward of the city in an open treeless plain; and, as the time for the evacuation of the province drew near, many were despatched to Pishin.<sup>1</sup> In some cases the change was attended with good results; in others, it did little, or nothing, to stay the plague; indeed, the troops quartered in new buildings suffered most,<sup>2</sup> whilst those who remained in their old barracks escaped unscathed. The following table when compared with the figures given for the Peshawar Valley Field Force, shows that whereas in the latter the epidemic was worst among the European troops, in the Kandahar Field Force the contrary was the case.

<i>Europeans.</i>	<i>Attacked.</i>	<i>Died.</i>
Officers . . . . .	7	7
Soldiers . . . . .	104	83
<i>Natives.</i>		
Officers . . . . .	2	2
Soldiers . . . . .	288	161
	<hr/> 401	<hr/> 253

Four hundred and fifty-eight camp-followers were also attacked, out of which number two hundred and fifty-nine died, but in this case it is impossible to institute a comparison, as, neither in the Khyber nor in the Kuram, was any record kept of the losses that occurred among the men by whose toil armies live and move and fight; but in both they were undoubtedly very heavy.

<sup>1</sup> "Cholera is still so bad (5th of August) that more than three-quarters of the troops are in camp, and I am sending them to Pishin as fast as I can." (*Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, p. 281.)

<sup>2</sup> "A very strange circumstance." (*Ibid.* p. 280.)

Taking all the three lines of advance into account, the death rate among European soldiers in the first phase of the second Afghan war, was much the same as in the Mutiny; but, whereas the death rate in 1858, when a large body of British troops was under canvas in the plains of India during the whole of the hot weather, was 111·07—on the Khyber line, in 1878-79, it was 138·15; and in the Peshawar Cantonments, 141·84 per 1,000 as against 5·33 in Fort William, Calcutta, and 5·34 in Bareilly.<sup>1 2</sup>

#### OBSERVATION

When medical experts are consulted on a question of health, they should be left free to give an opinion uninfluenced by any but sanitary considerations. It is for the Government, to whom that opinion is submitted, to weigh its conclusions against the political and financial considerations—supposing the two to clash—which may need to be taken into account before a decision can be reached and action taken. Had Surgeon-General Innes and his colleagues been simply asked to say which course was fraught with greater risk to the health of the Peshawar Field Force—the bringing it back to India at the hottest season of the year in the teeth of a great epidemic, or the leaving it in its present positions till the weather should grow cool and the disease die out—they would probably have advised the adoption of the latter course: firstly, because, though cholera was creeping up the Khyber, it would clearly be easier to take measures to control it among stationary troops than among troops on the march; secondly, because Gandamak, where far away the largest body of men was stationed, presented fairly favourable sanitary conditions; thirdly,

<sup>1</sup> *Moral and Material Progress in India*, 1879-80, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> “The results generally repeat the experience of the Mutiny years, and show that European troops cannot be exposed in the field during the hot weather in India without great sickness and mortality.” (*Sanitary Measures in India in 1879-80*, p. 49.)

because the evacuation contemplated was so far from being total that both European and Native troops were still to garrison Lundi Kotal, Ali Masjid, and Jamrud, the most unhealthy posts along the entire line. Such advice might not have changed the decision at which Lord Lytton ultimately arrived, but, by deepening the sense of responsibility under which that decision was taken, it ought to have saved him from the mistake of disestablishing the Divisional and Brigade Staffs of the Peshawar Valley Field Force just when their services were most needed by the troops whom, in the interests of economy, he felt it his duty to expose to exceptional risk of suffering, disease, and death.

## CHAPTER II

### Arrival of the British Mission in Kabul

ON the 6th of July, Cavagnari, accompanied by his Secretary, Mr. W. Jenkyns, C.S., left Simla to take up his appointment as British Envoy at the Court of the Amir. He carried with him no written instructions: in the uncertainty as to the state of things awaiting him at Kabul, they could not have been made precise, and general instructions were rendered unnecessary by the identity of view and aim existing between him and the Viceroy. Both men regarded the Treaty of Gandamak as a beginning, not an end, as "the inauguration of a sound and rational policy" rather than "its crowning result"; and Lord Lytton could feel certain that Cavagnari would use it as an instrument for bringing Afghanistan more and more under British influence. Yet, known only to one of the two, there was a point on which they differed. Lord Lytton looked with equal confidence to the near and to the distant future; Cavagnari, better informed as to the confusion into which Afghanistan had been plunged by the war, was not blind to the possibility that the next step towards the complete triumph of the Forward Policy might be precipitated by a catastrophe. He breathed no hint of this suspicion in the ears of his official superiors; it had no influence on the spirit of proud resolution in which he accepted the high position to which his energy and zeal had raised him; but some among his friends who saw him depart, knew that he believed himself to be going to his death.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "When he started for Kabul, with his new honours fresh upon him, he told his friends that the chances were four to one that he would never return from his mission." (*Pioneer*, July 3rd, 1899.)

It is probable that the smallness of his escort—it consisted only of twenty-five sabres and fifty rifles of the Guide Corps, all picked men, commanded by Lieutenant W. P. Hamilton, V.C., with Surgeon A. H. Kelly in medical charge—was due to these forebodings. He may well have felt that, as nothing short of an army could protect him against the dangers latent in a discontented soldiery and an angry people, the fewer persons to share those dangers with him, the better.

It had been decided that the Envoy should travel by the Shutargardan route, and nothing that he saw and heard on his way to the Afghan frontier was of a nature to render the outlook more hopeful. The Kuram showed no signs of a return to peace and order. Except for the withdrawal of the Punjab Princes' Contingent, there had been no reduction in the strength of its garrison, and the troops constituting it were still to all intents and purposes a Field Force, waging a fatiguing and harassing war with tribes quite indifferent to treaties of peace and cessions of territory made by one Government to another. All along the line of communications, soldiers and camp-followers were still frequently murdered, baggage animals stolen, camels carried off by deserters; and, on the Shutargardan, caravans conveying fruit from Afghanistan to India were stopped and plundered by the Ghilzais. The marauding bands were not afraid to fly at higher game—on one occasion, at the very highest, for, on the 15th of June, General Roberts himself, when accompanying a survey party in the Ahmed Khel territory, was set upon by a large body of Mangals, and only saved from capture or death by the gallantry of Major McQueen and a dozen men of the 5th Punjab Infantry. On the 20th, Surgeon W. B. Smyth was stabbed to death at Chapri, and, a week later, a Native officer of the 21st Punjab Infantry and his orderly were attacked at Balish Khel and killed before the escort, who were close behind, could come to their rescue.

In view of the disturbed state of the whole region, stringent measures were adopted to ensure Cavagnari's safety. Before his

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arrival at the Kuram Forts, Brigadier-General Dunham Massy who now commanded the 1st Brigade, Cobbe having been appointed to the Agra Command, occupied the Hazara Darakht Defile with four guns, and No. 2 Mountain Battery, a squadron of the 12th Bengal Cavalry, three companies of the 72nd Highlanders and the 5th Gurkhas; and it was under the protection of this force that the Envoy's party, accompanied by General Roberts and a large number of his officers, encamped on the 18th of July, at Kassim Khel, about three miles short of the cliff known as Karatiga, or the white rock, which marked the spot where British territory ended and Afghan territory began. At that boundary the party were met the next morning by Sirdar Khushdil Khan, the Amir's representative, and Padshah Khan, the Head of the Ghilzais.<sup>1</sup> Thenceforward the responsibility for the safety of the Envoy rested with these two men, so Dunham Massy and his troops went back to Kassim Khel, leaving Cavagnari, Roberts, and some fifty British officers to the protection of a squadron of Afghan Cavalry. In an upland valley, lying between the Sarkai Kotal and the Shutargardan, a tent had been pitched, and here the two Khans entertained their British visitors. The meal concluded, hosts and guests remounted and all rode forward together to the summit of the Shutargardan, where the Envoy and his escort took leave of the friends who had so far borne them company. No sign of anxiety or despondency marred that parting, yet after the farewells had been said, by a sudden impulse, Roberts and Cavagnari

<sup>1</sup> "Khushdil Khan's face was not a pleasing one; heavy dark eyebrows shaded his eyes and a heavy moustache his mouth, but the expression of his eyes when seen, was sinister, and the whole face was cruel; and though to some his very studied abstraction seemed to denote good manners, to others his silence, with downcast eyes, did not betoken a willing performance of the duty he was engaged in."

"Padshah Khan was an elderly man with a thin face, hooked nose and grey beard, the eye hungry-looking and restless, like all the half-starved mountaineer robbers of his clan."

(*With the Kuram Field Force*, by Major Colquhoun, p. 383.)



turned back to grasp once more each other's hand, and in that last warm pressure, Cavagnari may have recognized the echo of his own forebodings.<sup>1</sup>

The mission camped that night at the western foot of the Shutargardan and five days later entered Kabul, where it took possession of the quarters provided for it within the Bala Hissar. Roberts meantime had returned to the Kuram Forts, handed over the command of his troops to Dunham Massy, and started for Simla to enter on his duties as member of a Committee appointed to inquire into the defects in the organization of the Indian Army which the war had brought to light.

On the 12th of July, the Viceroy issued a General Order, in which, after congratulating "the Commander-in-Chief on the skilful conduct and satisfactory conclusion of the war, the political objects of which had been obtained by its military results," he thanked the General Officers, commanding the different Field Forces, for the success with which they had carried out the task allotted to them, recognized the ability shown by the General Staff of the Army, and bestowed high praise on the steady courage and discipline which throughout the vicissitudes of the campaign had marked the conduct of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the British and Native Forces engaged. The publication of this Order was quickly followed by a vote of thanks from both Houses of Parliament, and on the 29th of July, the *London Gazette* contained a long list of honours and promotions. The five column commanders, Generals Stewart, Browne, Maude, Biddulph, and

<sup>1</sup> "I could not feel happy as to the prospects of the Mission and my heart sank as I wished Cavagnari goodbye. When we had proceeded a few yards in our different directions we both turned round, retraced our steps, shook hands once more and parted for ever." (*Forty-one Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 179.)

Roberts mentions that, in ascending to the Sarkai Kotal, Cavagnari pointed out to him a solitary magpie, and begged him "not to mention the fact of his having seen it to his wife, as she would be sure to consider it an unlucky omen." (*Ibid.* p. 178.)

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Roberts, were made Knight-Commanders of the Military Division of the Bath; Cavagnari, Knight-Commander of the same Order in the Civil Division; and Colonel Pomeroy Colley, who had left India for South Africa a few days after the conclusion of peace, Knight-Commander of the Star of India. The Companionship of the Bath was bestowed on several junior officers; others obtained Brevet rank, but, in this distribution of rewards, the Forces on the Kandahar side were so strangely overlooked as to draw from their commander a sharply worded protest. "Before taking any official action in the matter," so wrote Sir Donald Stewart to the Adjutant-General, General Lumsden, "I want you to tell me, *if you can*, the principle on which the Brevets have been granted as well as the Decorations. It would seem that these rewards have been confined to the few officers of this Force who have been under fire. If that be so, then I and several others have been most improperly rewarded for our supposed services. I don't grudge rewards to men who have done good work according to their opportunities, but I think, if rewards are given to selected men, my opinions should have been asked for, even if they had not been allowed any weight. . . . Comparisons are odious, but you know officers will draw them, and though we have had little excitement in the fighting line, the work done by the troops here will not compare unfavourably with that done in the North, where the light has not been placed under a bushel." <sup>1</sup>

With these expressions of Parliamentary gratitude and Royal favour, the untoward episode in the relations of India and Afghanistan was supposed to be finally closed. Lord Lawrence might greet the news of the departure of Cavagnari and his companions to Kabul with the cry, "They will all be murdered, every one of them," and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, pp. 299, 300.

In a letter to his wife he refers to the same subject. "I have to-day (31st July) got a copy of the Gazette containing the Kabul honours, and I am not at all pleased with the distribution . . . and feel that I have almost got my K.C.B. on false pretences." (*Ibid.* pp. 280, 281.)

persist to his last hour—he died on the 25th of July, after a few days' illness—in believing that nothing but evil could come to India from the contest which her Government had provoked,<sup>1</sup> but the British Ministry continued to share Lord Lytton's confidence in the stability of the situation which that contest had created. "The war is over," cried Lord Salisbury, speaking in the City on the 9th of July, in a general atmosphere of contentment and self-satisfaction; "the war is over; peace is signed; Afghanistan is left; Afghanistan is not annexed, and the frontier of India is secured."<sup>2</sup> A week later Lord Cranbrook assured an audience at the West Kent Conservative Association, that under the influence of kindness and civilization, both the people of Afghanistan and the Independent Tribes would become our fast friends. The tone of the Press as a whole was equally hopeful. The *Times* lauded the terms of the Treaty of Gandamak as honourable to both parties, and predicted that India was about to enter upon a new era, in which the rulers were to be free from the fear of Russian invasion and her borders were no longer to be vexed by marauding raids, whilst commerce, ever expanding, was to prove a sure bond of good feeling and lasting friendship between the late foes.

The confidence born of a frontier line "drawn at the points of our own choice" was not so firmly rooted, however, as to be quite unshaken by the news that General Lasareff, the hero of Kars, was organizing a force on the south-eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, with a view to the punishment of the Tekke Turkomans, a plundering, slave-raiding tribe, the terror alike of Persia and Bokhara.<sup>3</sup> The small minority of Englishmen who would fain have drawn the North-West

<sup>1</sup> Bosworth Smith's *Life of Lord Lawrence*, Vol. II. pp. 649, 652, 654.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, July 11th, 1879.

<sup>3</sup> "Respecting Russia's right to conquer Central Asia and England's wisdom in opposing her, much argument may be expended and many opinions expressed; but there is one fact which stands out beyond all controversy—the Conquest of Central Asia has been a blessing, not only for Central Asia itself, but for all the nations abutting upon it."—Charles Marvin.

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frontier line at Kandahar and Kabul, were ready at once with the cry of "India in danger," and even the *Times* thought it necessary to declare that whatever Russia did, or threatened to do in Central Asia, would be looked upon with jealous eyes in India, though three weeks earlier it had boasted that thenceforth India need fear no enemy either near or far. The expedition, badly conducted and disgraced by most impolitic inhumanity, ended disastrously for the Russians; but as it was safe to prophesy that they would return, again and again, to the charge till they had turned defeat into victory, the alarmists retained their right to warn an easy-going public of trouble in store for them.<sup>1</sup> If these prophets, instead of directing their far-seeing gaze to the further side of the Hindu Kush, had fixed their eyes on Afghanistan, they would have found ample occasion to utter warnings which a few months would have fulfilled. In that distracted country the Mullahs were everywhere preaching a holy war against the British troops still occupying a large portion of its territory. There was a revolt in Turkestan, and the province of Badakshan, bordering on Kabul, was in open rebellion. At Herat, where the Governor, Ayub Khan, was the Amir's brother, the Kabul and Kandahar regiments, some of which were under orders for the capital, were so deeply tainted with disaffection that the officers had lost all

<sup>1</sup> The Expedition failed, primarily, through delays in starting caused by the difficulty of getting supplies and transport; and, secondarily, through the death of Lasareff, which threw the command into the hands of Lomakin, an incompetent general and cruel man, who in his eagerness to extirpate the Tekke Turkomans refused to treat with their chiefs, shut every avenue of escape, turned back the women and children flying from the fire of his artillery, and then, with a force of only 1,400 men, at a point miles from his base, assaulted a strongly fortified, unbreached enclosure, in the teeth of 15,000 desperate men and their equally desperate wives and daughters. The attack was beaten off and the Russians might have been annihilated the following night, had the Turkomans known how to take advantage of their victory. As it was, the retreat, begun the next day, ended in utter demoralization, and only a small proportion of the force, which had left the shores of the Caspian in August, regained them in October.—H. B. H.

power over the men ; throughout the province, trade and industries had ceased to be carried on ; in the city, all shops, except those of butchers, bakers, and grocers, were closed ; and everywhere the people, harried by a lawless soldiery and plundered by the authorities, who, trembling for their tenure of office, were mercilessly collecting a year's revenue in advance, were trying to escape utter ruin by burying their money and valuables. In Kabul, the Amir, compelled to despatch existing regiments to put an end to the disorders in Turkestan and Badakshan, found great difficulty in raising fresh troops to take their place, and those he did succeed in enlisting, badly disciplined and ill-paid, were a danger to the city and himself, and, above all, to the British guests for whose safety he was bound to provide.

In Kandahar alone, where Sir Donald Stewart had firmly refused to surrender his authority to the Afghan Governor, Sirdar Sher Ali Khan, order prevailed, and the arrangements for the return of the troops to India could be quietly carried on. In the middle of August, preparations for the evacuation of the city were begun, and on the 4th of September, the Second Infantry Brigade left their cantonment and marched for Quetta. On the 5th, the First Brigade accompanied by the General and his Staff, moved out into camp ready to follow in the wake of the leading column ; but at mid-day came a telegram from the Viceroy, on receipt of which Sir Donald Stewart promptly re-occupied the citadel and barracks,<sup>1</sup> and recalled the troops that were already on their way home. The telegram ran thus :—" All troops at present under orders to return to India, stand fast until further orders. Please telegraph present distribution of troops and what are at Kandahar ; and also transport available at Kandahar and between this and Quetta, and what reserve of supplies you have." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During the short period the barracks had remained empty, they had to a great extent been gutted of their windows and doors by the Afghans. (*Kandahar in 1879*, by Major Le Messurier, p. 253.)

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 46.

## CHAPTER III

### Cavagnari in Kabul

THE entry of the British Mission into Kabul was marked by no untoward incident. Saluted by Afghan Artillery, escorted by Afghan Cavalry, mounted on elephants sent out to meet them, the Envoy and his European companions passed slowly through orderly and respectful crowds to the dwelling prepared for them in the Bala Hissar, where the Prime Minister, Sirdar Habibulla Khan, and the Commander-in-Chief, Daud Shah, were waiting to welcome them. In the evening, when Cavagnari paid a visit of ceremony to the Amir, he was received with the utmost friendliness, and the next day Yakub Khan showed his readiness to fulfil his treaty obligations by laying before him some letters which had passed between himself and General Kaufmann, and gave signal proof of the confidence he placed in his British guests by acceding to the Envoy's request that the members of the Mission should be free to receive visits from Afghan officials and Sirdars. The correspondence, which was merely one of congratulation on Kaufmann's side, and of polite acknowledgement on the Amir's, was forwarded to Lord Lytton, who, taking into account the disturbed state of Turkestan and the Amir's natural anxiety to conciliate a man who had Abdur Rahman in his keeping, was wise enough to abstain from making it a subject of complaint.<sup>1</sup>

If Cavagnari built any hopes for the success of his Mission on

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, pp. 7, 9.



the peaceful nature of his reception in Kabul, those hopes were of short duration. A very few days disclosed to him the dangers by which he was surrounded. Into a city devastated by cholera,<sup>1</sup> the Herati Regiments were pouring, fresh from the plunder of the Hazara villages, deficient in discipline, clamorous for pay. A Foreign Minister might assure the Envoy that the disturbances were the work of "a few wild spirits," that in a day or two the troops would receive their arrears and be sent away on furlough<sup>2</sup>; but he must have known that the men had already refused to go to their homes till the last penny of their back pay had been counted out to them, and that there was not money enough in the treasury to give them what they claimed.

It had been arranged that Cavagnari should communicate with the Indian Government in two ways—in detail, by means of weekly diaries, and more briefly, as need might arise, by letter or written message to be carried by special runners to the British outpost at Ali Khel, and thence telegraphed on to Simla by the Political Officer.

The Diary ending August 9th gave a full account of the condition of the town after the arrival of the Herati regiments, and of the Envoy's interview with the Foreign Minister; but already on the 8th, the Viceroy had received the following telegram from Cavagnari:—

"Kabul, August 6th. Alarming reports personally reached me to-day from several sources of the mutinous behaviour of the Herati regiments lately arrived here, some of the men having been seen going about the city with drawn swords, and using inflammatory

<sup>1</sup> Munshi Bukhtiar Khan, the pro tem. representative of the British Government at Kabul, died of cholera the day before Cavagnari arrived. In *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, pp. 339 and 340, it is stated that "considerable evidence was brought forward later to prove that he (Bukhtiar Khan) was poisoned by the Amir." There is no published official evidence in support of this grave charge; certainly Cavagnari never dropped a hint of foul play. Perhaps the author did not know how easily evidence is manufactured in Afghanistan, especially evidence likely to damage a fallen man and to please his enemies.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 28.

language against the Amir and his English visitors, and I was strongly advised not to go out for a day or two." <sup>1</sup>

It is strange that a message of such grave import should have aroused so little anxiety in Lord Lytton's mind that he could delay forwarding it to the Secretary of State till the 18th, and then send it on without a word of comment ; but it is stranger still that Cavagnari himself should have failed to recognize its full significance. Had he done so, he would hardly have declined to make immediate use of the Viceroy's offer, telegraphed to him on the 24th of August, to give Yakub Khan pecuniary aid, if such aid were necessary to extricate him from his difficulties, on the ground that he hoped, later, to turn such aid to account as a lever for obtaining reforms in the Afghan Administration. Only a man whose eyes were holden so that he could not see clearly, would have been writing about administrative reforms when the problem of the hour was how to uphold the Amir's authority against the chaotic forces that were threatening to sweep it away, for it is impossible to believe that Cavagnari courted destruction in order to furnish Lord Lytton with an excuse for the renewal of the war, and the annexation of Afghanistan. It is true he spoke words on which such a construction might be put, as when he said to a friend : " If my death places the red line on the Hindu Kush, I don't mind," or when he answered the earnest warnings of Ressaldar-Major Nakshband Khan, a former Native Officer in a Bengal Cavalry regiment, with the words : " They can only kill the three or four of us here, and our death will be avenged." It was one thing for him to find consolation for a possible catastrophe in the belief that it would bring about the complete triumph of the forward policy, and quite another, deliberately to sacrifice his own life, the lives of his three European companions, of the seventy-five men of his escort, and of the numerous servants who had followed

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan*. (1880), No. 1, p. 18.

the Mission to Kabul, to so doubtful a prospect of ultimate advantage to India ; and the answer to Nakshband Khan may fairly be taken as representing his conviction that in an attitude bold, even to defiance, lay the Mission's best chance of safety, for his words were sure to be repeated, and might give pause to the " wild spirits " who were going about the city abusing him by name, and threatening to kill him. And, from first to last, just such an attitude did he maintain ; yielding nothing to the warnings that daily reached him ; insisting on the withdrawal of the guard placed at the gate of the Residency in part, at least, for its protection ; riding out, day after day, attended by a troop of Afghan Cavalry and a few men of his own mounted escort ; and in his frequent interviews with the Amir and his Ministers, resolutely speaking out his mind on every point that presented itself for discussion.

If further proof be needed that it was blindness to the pressing nature of the crisis in which he was involved, not desire to precipitate its catastrophe, which prompted Cavagnari to postpone availing himself of the Viceroy's liberality, it is to be found in his projected tour round India with the Amir, before accompanying his royal charge to Agra to attend the Durbar which Lord Lytton had arranged to hold there in February 1880,<sup>1</sup> for at the very time when he was busying himself with the details of this journey, he was writing down in his Diary such reports of disaffection and mutiny in every province of the kingdom as should have convinced him that, for years to come, Yakub Khan's hands would be too full, his position too insecure, to allow of his leaving his country for a single day.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See letters of Dr. Kelly. *Life of Sir Louis Cavagnari*, by Kally Prosono Dey, pp. 158-161.

<sup>2</sup> In the Diary ending Aug. 16 he reported (see *Afghanistan* (1880), pp. 28, 29, 30) that the ammunition of the Herati regiments at Kabul had been taken from them ; again, that a large number of troops sent to Ghazni had deserted on the march, and that General Ghulam Hyder Khan had been defeated by the rebels in Turkestan ; in his last Diary, that the troops in Turkestan were

It is, of course, impossible to affirm that any pecuniary aid given to the Amir would have done more than postpone the catastrophe which was now close at hand ; but in such aid, promptly given, lay the one chance of saving the Mission from immediate annihilation at the hands of the troops, for the mutinous spirit which pervaded the whole Afghan Army was so largely due to the men's poverty that it might have been dispelled by the satisfaction of their just demands. No doubt there were risks attendant on investing the British Envoy with the character of paymaster to his host's creditors, but these could have been lessened by giving the money, not as a concession to the demands of the soldiery, but in fulfilment of the treaty obligation to pay Yakub Khan a yearly subsidy of six lakhs of rupees. No expedient, however, could do more than lessen the dangers threatening the Mission, for its mere presence in Kabul evoked hopes it could not fulfil, whilst detracting from the authority of the prince on whom it had to depend for protection. Only a few days after his arrival in Kabul, Cavagnari had reported to Lord Lytton that the populace expected him not only to obtain for the soldier his arrears of pay, but also to secure the removal of oppressive taxation and the abolition of compulsory military service. As might have been foreseen, the British Envoy represented to all classes of Afghans not so much the power, as the wealth of the British Empire ; and, with that inexhaustible fund to draw upon, it was believed that he could buy from the Amir whatever redress of public grievances, whatever private boon he might be induced to demand. Thus, with or against his will, Cavagnari

supposed not to be sufficiently in hand to be used to restore order in Badakshan, that six regiments of infantry, one of cavalry, and two batteries of artillery under orders for the first-named province had only been brought to march by the payment of two months' arrears, and that many desertions were expected en route. He also gave details of mutinies in Turkestan and at Ghazni, and reported that the Amir had sent the Prime Minister to say that, owing to the unruly conduct of the troops, it would not be prudent for Major St. John (Political Officer at Kandahar) to travel to Persia through Herat.—H. B. H.

was bound to become a centre round which public and private discontent would seek to gather, with the result that he must either break the promise of non-interference given to the Amir, making him his enemy, or, by keeping it, expose himself to the resentment of all disappointed suitors for the exercise of his influence in their favour. So far this inevitable source of difficulty and danger had only revealed itself in that general feeling of expectancy of which he had taken early note. Little use had been made of the Amir's consent to freedom of intercourse between his subjects and the members of the Mission ; in part because such intercourse, though permitted, was not encouraged by Yakub Khan and his Ministers, in part because the Envoy was chary of receiving the persons most likely to visit him, namely the Sirdars who had assisted the British during the war, and who now desired that the amnesty guaranteed to them in the Treaty of Gandamak should be interpreted so as to cover a claim to the restitution of their former appointments and allowances—pretensions to which he could not lend his support. "There can be no question," so he wrote on the 30th of August, "as to his (the Amir's) perfect right to grant these men whatever allowances he thinks proper, or to give or withhold lucrative appointments they are desirous of obtaining. All that we can properly contend for is that their persons and private property shall not be subject to molestation on account of their connection with us."<sup>1</sup>

The letter from which the above passage is quoted, and to which attaches the melancholy interest of being the last written by Cavagnari to Lord Lytton, is of great value as showing what were the writer's views on points which were subsequently to become matters for investigation. It proves that, in the Envoy's opinion, nothing calling for complaint could be laid to the charge of the Afghan Government ; that the religious element in Kabul had abstained from exciting bad

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 345.

feeling against the Mission ; that the conduct of the populace had all along been orderly ; and that, though stories hinting at treachery on the part of Yakub Khan were being poured into his ears, they had not shaken his confidence in the Amir's good faith. The letter further shows that Cavagnari had fallen into the characteristic error of confounding discontent at Native bad administration with eagerness to welcome Foreign rule, and of attributing the weakness of Yakub Khan's authority to Shere Ali's tyranny, instead of to the self-evident fact that the son had had no opportunity of restoring the order, which the father had established and the British invasion broken down.

How weak the Amir's authority, even in his capital, was perhaps better known to the men of the escort than to the members of the Mission. No Sikh or Hindu dared show his face in the city ; only in parties of ten or twelve could they venture down to the river to bathe or wash their clothes ; even the Mahomedans always went into the streets armed, and four or five together ; and the scowling looks and taunting words which met them at every turn, and which they were ashamed to report to the Sahibs, were talked over by the men in their quarters at the Residency with many prophecies of coming doom.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statement of Hassan Gul, Sepoy. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 127.

In the statement of Allal-ud-Din it is mentioned that a few days before the outbreak there was a quarrel in the street between some Kabulis and some Sepoys about a woman, and that on the 3rd of September three Kabuli women were brought out of the Hammam of the Residency, and killed by the mutineers. (Ibid. p. 87.)



## CHAPTER IV

### The Last Hours of the Kabul Mission

It is impossible to give an accurate account of the last hours of the British Mission to Kabul ; no Englishman survived to tell the tale from the point of view of those inside the Residency ; the three or four men of the Guides who, by one or other strange chance, were preserved from sharing their comrades' fate, could only speak with certainty on matters which had come within their notice, and, even as regards these, were liable to error, by reason of the haste and pressure of events, which left them no time for careful observation of details of time and place ; whilst the stories told by Afghan witnesses, especially by the enemies of the Amir on the one hand, and by the Amir himself on the other, require to be received with great reserve. There is not a single point, from the number and composition of the regiments that began the attack on the Residency, to the manner and moment of the death of its last defenders, on which all are agreed<sup>1</sup> ; yet from this cloud of clashing statements three things emerge clearly : —viz. that the outbreak was a purely military one ; that its immediate cause was the denial to certain troops of their full arrears of pay ; and that, at the moment, it was quite unpremeditated, though weeks of fuming over the presence of foreign infidels in Kabul had prepared the way for just such an explosion.

A clear and well-connected account of the events of the 3rd of

<sup>1</sup> See *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, pp. 65, 66, 77, 79, 86, 88, 93, 115, 124, 128.

September, as seen from outside the Residency, was given to Mr. G. B. Scott of the Survey Department, by a Mullah with whom he had a long conversation, some months after the entrance of Sir Frederick Roberts's troops into Kabul. It bears, perhaps, traces of a desire to place the conduct of the priesthood in a favourable light, but the part which it assigns to the narrator and his brother-mullahs is in harmony with Cavagnari's statement, that the religious element in the capital had done nothing to excite public feeling against the Mission; and as Scott, who knew the Afghans better than most men, saw no reason to doubt the *bona fides* of his informant, the story may safely be used to supplement or confirm the statements published in the Blue Books.

Using all sources of information, and, where one witness contradicts another, selecting the account that seems, in itself, the more probable, the story of the attack on the Residency and the massacre of the British Mission runs thus :—

On the 1st or 2nd of September some regiments, probably three of the six that had come from Herat,<sup>1</sup> sent a deputation to the palace to represent their miserable condition to the Amir. The deputation was received either by Daud Shah, or by the Amir himself, and was sent away with the promise of a speedy payment of all arrears. If this interview took place, Cavagnari would know of it, and would regard the promise given to the troops as a hopeful augury for the peace of the city. Certainly, on the evening of the 2nd of September, he had no special reason for uneasiness; so the next morning a foraging party issued from the Residency bound for some waste grazing lands near the village of Ben-i-Hissar.<sup>2</sup> It consisted of a non-commissioned

<sup>1</sup> Three Herati regiments had been paid up most of their arrears and had dispersed to their homes, terrified by the cholera, which was raging so violently that a hundred and fifty men had died in one day. See Deposition of Ressaldar-Major Nakshband Khan. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Foraging only began on the 1st of September; up to that date, forage had been brought to the Residency.—H. B. H.

officer, Kote Duffadar Futteh Mahomed, and two Sowars—Akbar Shah, a Mahomedan, and Narain Sing, a Sikh. It had an escort of four Afghan troopers and was accompanied by Lieutenant Hamilton and Dr. Kelly, to see that the grass-cutters did not trespass on any cultivated fields; and when they had satisfied themselves that there was no danger of damage being done to the villagers' crops, the two English officers rode back to the Residency.

About an hour later, the foragers were startled by the sound of continuous firing, coming from the direction of the Bala Hissar. The Kote Duffadar, well aware of the angry feelings entertained towards the Mission by the Herati troops, knew at once that mischief was afoot. His first action was to despatch twenty-three of the grass-cutters, in charge of the four Afghan troopers, to the care of Ibrahim Khan, an ex-officer of the Bengal Cavalry, at this time commanding an Afghan regiment of horse cantoned close to Ben-i-Hissar; then, with the sowars and the remaining two grass-cutters, he started for the Residency, the roof of which, as they drew nearer, they saw to be crowded with men—an unprecedented circumstance, for, to avoid giving umbrage to the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses, no one was allowed access to that roof. Undeterred by this proof of the terrible nature of the peril into which they were running, the five men pressed on till brought to a sudden standstill by the sight of a crowd of armed ruffians rushing towards them from the town. To reach the Bala Hissar being now out of the question, Futteh Mahomed and his companions turned off in the direction of a fort belonging to the Amir's father-in-law, Sirdar Yahiya Khan, but before they had gone far, they were overtaken by the Afghan troopers, who had done their duty by the grass-cutters, but were now bent on killing the Sikh soldier, Narain Sing. The bold front shown by him and his Mahomedan comrades kept them from carrying out their purpose, and the little band gained the fort, to find, to their joy, that the garrison was partly composed of Kazalbashis, men of Futteh Mahomed's

and Akbar Shah's own tribe, who now carried off the fugitives to the Murad Khana, their particular quarter of Kabul, and stoutly refused to give them up to the furious rabble clamouring for their blood. In the night, however, they smuggled Narain Sing out of the Murad Khana and hid him safely in a dharamsala in another part of the city.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the tragedy, the first act of which these men had beheld from afar, was going rapidly forward to its consummation in blood and fire.

Soon after the foraging party had started for the grazing grounds, two or three regiments in uniform and wearing their side-arms, but without their rifles, marched into the Bala Hissar and formed up on the open space below the Palace. From the first moment their conduct was disorderly, and when they were offered a part, instead of the whole, of the arrears owing to them, they broke out into open mutiny.

The Amir sent Daud Shah to try to pacify them, but his attempts to make them hear reason only increased their anger. Several accounts attribute the suggestion that they should address themselves to the British Envoy, to Abdul Karim Khan, Colonel of one of the disaffected regiments, but the Mullah told Scott that it came from the ranks, a voice suddenly calling out :—"Let us go to Cavagnari. He will pay us."<sup>2</sup>

Whoever put the thought into the men's heads, once there, they were quick to act upon it. Breaking their ranks, they knocked down and severely injured Daud Shah, who strove to stop them, and rushed shouting towards the Residency. Pouring into its compound, their attention was at first attracted by the stables, and for a quarter of an hour the looting of these kept them busy ; then something happened which exasperated them to fury. One witness declares that the men

<sup>1</sup> Statement of Futteh Mahomed Khan. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Wali Muhammad Khan's Memorandum speaks as if the Amir had personally interviewed the troops. (*Ibid.* p. 115.)

of the escort were forbidden to fire on the looters, and that the order was obeyed<sup>1</sup>; another asserts that the guard at the Residency door fired without orders, killing six or nine of the mutineers.<sup>2</sup> The Mullah, speaking from hearsay, told Scott that after the troops had been a little while in the compound, the Envoy came out upon the roof and called down to them, demanding what they had come for. A spokesman cried back that the regiments wanted their arrears of pay, and looked to him for them. Cavagnari answered briefly that he could not interfere between the Amir and his troops; whereupon the soldiers, maddened with disappointment, pressed so fiercely against the house that the door burst open, and the guard within fired in self-defence.<sup>3</sup>

It is so probable that speech did pass between the ringleaders of the troops and the Envoy, that this story might be accepted, but for the difficulty of believing that, at a moment when the lives of all those who had followed him to Kabul were hanging on his answer, Cavagnari, with Lord Lytton's offer of pecuniary aid to the Amir in his possession, should have given a point-blank refusal to the soldiers' demands: yet pride and disdain of lesser men were such marked features of his character that they may have triumphed over prudence and the sense of responsibility, and betrayed him into words which were the death-warrant of the Mission.

Whatever happened to change for the worse the temper of the troops, this is certain, that, yelling furiously, they burst out of the compound in search of arms. Some ran to their camp outside the city to fetch their rifles, others broke into the Arsenal, close at hand, to supply themselves with ammunition. The respite thus afforded

<sup>1</sup> See Sepoy Russul's Statement, *Ibid.* p. 63; also the same Sepoy's Cross-examination, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> See Taimur's Statements, *Ibid.* pp. 94, 95; also Russul's, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Another witness testifies to Cavagnari's having addressed the troops, but in the opposite sense, promising them twelve months' pay if they would desist. (*Ibid.* p. 124.)

them was used by Cavagnari in preparing for a stubborn resistance. A really successful defence was out of the question, for the house, commanded on the South by the fort, on the North and West by houses higher than itself, with a steep fall to the Kabul River on the East, was, in Sir Charles Macgregor's emphatic words, "a regular rat-trap";<sup>1</sup> but the longer the besieged could hold out, the more chance would there be of the Amir's taking steps to pacify or overawe the mutinous regiments. So the men of the escort were withdrawn from their quarters into the main building, Cavagnari himself helping to cut slits for the rifles in the parapet of the roof.

The soldiers who had forced their way into the fort soon began firing on the Residency, and Cavagnari is said to have fired the first shot in reply, which killed a man standing in the doorway of the Arsenal. Then the troops that had gone back to camp, reinforced by three other corps, and all the scum of the city, armed with swords and knives, came streaming into the Bala Hissar, and took cover, from which they so harassed the defenders of the Residency that, about nine o'clock, Cavagnari, Jenkyns, Hamilton, and Kelly, followed by twenty-five men of the escort, charged out and drove them off—"the Afghans," according to an eye-witness, "running like sheep before a wolf." This charge was followed by three others—the first led by all the Europeans except Cavagnari, the second by Hamilton and Jenkyns, the third by a Sikh Jemadar.<sup>2</sup>

About mid-day Cavagnari was wounded in the head by a rifle bullet, and, apparently by his orders, Jenkyns despatched a letter to the Amir asking for instant help, which Ghulam Nabbi, a resident

<sup>1</sup> "We rode mostly all through the Bala Hissar and then to Cavagnari's house, which is a poor place and a regular rat-trap, closely surrounded by houses, and completely looked into by the upper hill." (*Life of Sir C. Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 131.)

<sup>2</sup> Deposition of Ressaldar-Major Nakshband Khan, Sirdar Bahadar. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 83.



in Kabul who had once served in the Guides, succeeded in delivering.<sup>1</sup> Soon afterwards a second letter was sent by a Hindu, but he was killed on emerging from the Residency.

About 2 p.m. guns were brought to bear on the Residency, and at the same time ladders were reared against its walls, up which the troops swarmed on to the roof. Its defenders rushed down the staircase with the Afghans at their heels, to find the interior of the building already in the hands of enemies who had crept in through a hole in the wall. A few seconds later, the house was in a blaze, fired, some accounts say, by the mob, others, by the survivors of the garrison to cover their retreat to the Hammam (bath-house). The wooden supports on which the house rested soon burnt through, and the walls fell, burying under smoking ruins all the dead and wounded—among them Cavagnari. A little later, the door of the Hammam was blown in and the men inside, headed by Hamilton and Jenkyns, rushed out to meet the entering crowd, and died, fighting bravely to the last. Kelly is believed to have perished in the Residency, and one account says that he was not killed till the following morning.

The attack on the Embassy, which began at eight o'clock in the morning, came to an end, so far as resistance went, about four in the afternoon, though single shots were heard as late as seven in the evening. Accounts differ as to what was going on in the precincts of the Palace during those seven hours, but all agree as to their having been the scene of terror, confusion, and indecision. For the early part of the day, the story of Mr. Scott's informant is very simple and graphic. It tells how, alarmed by the noise of firing and the sight of

<sup>1</sup> Nakshband Khan, Allal-ud-Din, brother of Padshah Khan, Akbar Shah, one of the troopers who had gone out with the grass-cutters, and Hamilton's syce Husein attribute the letter to Cavagnari, but one and all spoke from hearsay (*Ibid.* pp. 81, 87, 79), whereas Trooper Taimur and Ressaldar Bahaw-ud-Din say positively that it was written and sent by Jenkyns (*Ibid.* pp. 94-95, 85).

all the *badmashes* of the town rushing towards the Bala Hissar, he went out into the street to see what was wrong, and how he received a message bidding him hurry to the mosque near the Palace. There he found several of the oldest Mullahs and Syuds, and, after a hasty consultation, it was decided to urge the Amir to go to the help of his guests. They found him outside the Palace, looking towards the Residency, crying and tearing his hair and clothes, many high officials around him, and, close at hand, three companies of artillery standing to their guns. The head Mullah went up to him, and, pointing to the fighting, said :—"Are you crying here, and your guests being murdered?" "My Kismet is bad, what can I do?" asked the Amir. "Order your artillery to fire," answered the Mullah. "What use? they are thousands and will eat us all up." "Then go and die rather than disgrace Islam," cried the Mullah; but Yakub only wept and tore at his hair and clothes. Then the Mullahs turned to Daud Shah, and after a little the Commander-in-Chief mounted his horse and tried to force his way to the Residency. From where the Amir and the Mullahs stood, they saw him pass through the stragglers on the edge of the tumult—saw the crowd turn upon him—saw him draw his sword, and, a moment later, fall from his horse under a shower of stones. "Then Yakub, covering his face with his hands and crying, walked into the Palace," and the Mullahs went away "to pray." "The noise at that time was awful," so the Mullah ended his story :—"the Residency was hidden in dust and smoke. Every now and again a cannon roared and the musketry fire was incessant. I know no more till the mob began to flock back through the streets, crying that all the Kafirs were dead. Then I knew the English would come to Kabul."

One witness—Allal-ud-Din, brother of Padshah Khan—says that Yakub Khan was anxious at one time to go himself to the help of the Mission, but that Mullah Shah Mahomed and the Mustaufi restrained him, fearing that the crowd would treat him as they had

treated Daud Shah.<sup>1</sup> This was probably after the receipt of Jenkyns's letter, across which the Amir is said to have written :—" If God will I am making an arrangement " ; certainly, just before the Residency was seen to be on fire, he did send out the heir-apparent, a boy of eight, with his tutor, bearing the Koran, his grandfather, Yahiya Khan, Habibulla Khan, Padshah Khan, and other Sirdars, to try to turn the mutineers from their bloody work ; but to no purpose. The Koran was snatched from the tutor's hands, the voices of the chiefs were drowned in the yells of men, the rattle of musketry, the crash of falling walls ; and the terrified ambassadors turned back discomfited.<sup>2</sup> It is improbable, however, that anything the Amir could have done would have made a difference in the fate of the Mission. In the quarter of an hour during which the troops were away arming themselves, he might, perhaps, have made an attempt to save the four Europeans, but the time was far too short to allow of withdrawing the men of the escort and the many servants and camp-followers into such protection as the Palace could afford ; and Cavagnari, Jenkyns, Hamilton, and Kelly were not men to accept the chance of safety for themselves alone. Later, with half the people of the town and nearly all the troops taking part in the attack on the Residency, there was no force that he could have sent to its relief, and to have ordered the gunners to fire on the enormous crowds of armed men surrounding it—supposing them to have obeyed—would only have involved him and all his people in the tragedy which was being enacted before his eyes—a sacrifice which might have preserved the honour of Islam, but could not have saved the lives of his guests.

The Mission had been five weeks and six days in Kabul when the end came, and Shere Ali's warning that, even in his capital, no Amir of Afghanistan could safeguard the lives of British Officers had fulfilled itself with startling speed. Not faster, however, than

<sup>1</sup> See *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 87

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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might have been foreseen, for to throw men, whose presence must ever be obnoxious to the national sentiment, into a semi-barbarous country, the nominal ruler of which was unpopular with his people and without any authority over his troops, was to condemn them to an early death. Prudence should have delayed the departure of Cavagnari from India till Yakub Khan, securely seated on his throne, could have offered him, at least, the ordinary amount of protection which an Afghan prince can afford to foreigners. Impatient to reap the most coveted of the fruits of the war, Lord Lytton despatched Cavagnari in haste to Kabul to add to the Amir's difficulties and provoke his own tragic fate.

## CHAPTER V

### Preparations for a British Occupation of Kabul

THE Simla season was an unusually busy and brilliant one that year, and neither the higher military officials, absorbed in the work of the Commission of inquiry into the defects in the administration of the army revealed by the late campaign, nor the crowds of younger men who had flocked up to the hills to enjoy themselves and recruit after the hardships and fatigues of the war, gave more than a passing thought to the position and prospects of the Mission, on whose safety depended the maintenance of the peace over which all were rejoicing. Such news of it as reached the general public was good. Cholera had passed it by, the Amir was friendly, and soon Cavagnari would be bringing him to India to strengthen his sense of the value of the alliance that had been forced upon him, by the contrast between his own poverty and impotence, and the wealth and strength of the British Government. If Lord Lytton and the Members of his Council, pondering over the Envoy's Diaries, had misgivings, they kept them to themselves, and, on the whole, were content to believe that Cavagnari's telegrams, from which the words "all well" were seldom absent, referred to more than the health of himself and his companions.

It was therefore into a society unprepared for evil tidings that the news of the attack on the British Residency fell like a thunderbolt. To the Government, it came very early on the morning of the 5th of September, in the following telegram from Conolly to Sir F. Roberts :—

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"A man who says he is in Sir Louis Cavagnari's service, has arrived in hot haste from Kabul, and solemnly states that yesterday morning the Residency was attacked by three regiments who had mutinied for their pay, they having guns and being joined by a portion of six other regiments. The Embassy and escort were defending themselves when he left Kabul about noon yesterday. I hope to receive further news." <sup>1</sup>

Roberts hurried with the alarming message to the Viceroy, who immediately summoned his Council to consider with him the steps that would now have to be taken. As the telegram left a loophole for hope that the members of the Embassy might still be living, it was decided to keep the bad news secret for the present, and to order Brigadier-General Dunham Massy, the senior officer in the Kuram, to hold two Mountain Batteries, a Squadron of Cavalry, a company of Sappers and Miners, and three thousand Infantry, half of whom were to be European troops, in readiness for a rush on Kabul should the next news give grounds for believing that relief might still be possible. At the same time an alternative plan of a far more extensive character, based on the assumption that the Embassy had ceased to exist, and that a punitive, not a relief, expedition must be organized, was anxiously discussed, and General Roberts nominated to its command.<sup>2</sup>

All through that day the few men who shared the sad secret worked hard at preparations for one or the other course of action ; and before night they knew which it was to be, for at dinner the Viceroy received a second telegram from Conolly, reporting that two letters had arrived from the Amir which left "no hope as to the fate of Embassy and escort." <sup>3</sup>

The blow was the worst which could have befallen Lord Lytton, but the desire to keep the general public a little longer in ignorance

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42.



helped him to conceal his distress ; and, by his wish, Lady Lytton, accompanied by two guests, who had no inkling of the load of anxiety weighing on their hostess, attended a performance at the theatre got up by his aides-de-camp. She returned home to find that, in her absence, Conolly had telegraphed an epitome of the Amir's two letters—the first, dated September the 3rd, 8 a.m., the second, September the 4th.<sup>1</sup> With the loss of the last glimmer of hope, all need for concealment had vanished, and next morning the officers who were to accompany Sir F. Roberts, received orders to be ready to start that afternoon for the Kuram and Kabul. The news of the massacre of the Embassy, passing from mouth to mouth, quickly plunged Simla into gloom, whilst one telegram carried the fatal intelligence to the Secretary of State for India and the British people, and another warned Sir Donald Stewart to recall the troops that had started for India, and to stand fast at Kandahar.

That same day, Brigadier-General Dunham Massy was directed by the Commander-in-Chief to occupy the Shutargardan with a Mountain Battery, the 5th Gurkhas, 23rd Pioneers, and a company of Sappers and Miners ; and Conolly was instructed to inform the Amir that a British Force, under General Sir F. Roberts, would soon be on its way to his assistance, *via* that pass, and to request him to do all in his power to facilitate its advance.

Dunham Massy at once began carrying out his orders, and Conolly

<sup>1</sup> " We were a small party—the Barnetts, Lady Anne Kerr and Colonel Stansfield—no A.D.C.'s, and Sir Michael Kennedy the only guest. But he and the others knew nothing of what was going on, so we had to keep up appearances even when the look which passed over his Excellency's face when he read the telegram told us pretty well that there was little hope left. . . . Nothing was to be known as yet, so Lady Lytton went to the theatre with Mrs. Barnett and Sir Ashley (Eden). . . . I heard no more until this morning, when a letter came from Lady L. telling me it was all true ; when she was coming home last night she met Z. ; he passed without a look or word or bow, and she knew worse news had come. She got up to Lord L. and found it was a letter from the Amir." (Letter from Lady Colley to her husband, dated September 6th, 1879. See *Life of Sir G. Colley*, pp. 239, 240.)

communicated both with the Amir and with the Ghilzai Chief, Padshah Khan, desiring the latter to come himself to the Shutargardan or to send his brother—Allal-ud-Din—or his uncle, Sirkai Khan, to arrange for the safe passage of British convoys through Ghilzai territory.<sup>1</sup>

Sir F. Roberts, accompanied by Colonel C. Macgregor, the Chief of his Staff, arrived at Ali Khel on the 12th of September to find the Shutargardan occupied by a force under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel A. A. Currie, the Pioneers entrenching the position taken up, and the Sappers and Miners improving the rough and steep ascent to the Sirkai Kotal. The force at his disposal for the advance on Kabul numbered only six thousand five hundred men of all ranks—the line of communication between the Shutargardan and Thal was to be held by four thousand troops under General T. E. Gordon—yet, moderate as were its proportions, the question of how to equip it with the necessary transport was a difficult one to answer. Very few of the beasts of draught and burden collected for use in the late campaign had survived its rigours, and most of those survivors had disappeared or been dispersed over the district in search of grazing grounds; whilst the transport organization—never much to boast of—had been broken up.<sup>2</sup> To meet the latter difficulty, the Government of India created a new office—that of Controller-General of Supply and Transport—and appointed as its head Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Kennedy, R.E., who, during the recent famine, had given proof of great administrative ability. As he was to be solely responsible for the supply of commissariat and regimental transport to the columns detailed for active service in the Khyber and the Kuram,<sup>3</sup> Kennedy was invested with special powers for the expeditious

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorandum on the Supply and Transport Arrangements during 1879–80*, p. 1, by Sir M. Kennedy.

<sup>3</sup> The Supply and Transport of the Kandahar troops was transferred to the Bombay Government.—H. B. H.

conduct of the business of his department, and, though still under the Civil Government, was authorized to communicate direct with the Commander-in-Chief. The transport, once handed over to the corps to which it was assigned, was to become a part of its regimental equipment, and the responsibility for it to rest thenceforward entirely with the commanding officer.<sup>1</sup> This was but an extension of the system in vogue in the Punjab Frontier Force, thanks to which the troops composing that body had been in a fit state to take the field at the beginning of the war. But the best of systems, even with a capable and energetic man to administer it, takes time to get into working order, and, in Sir Michael's own words, of "time there was none to spare"; and as the authorities, military and political, "had been caught in a state of unreadiness, everything had to be improvised."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately this improvising included the denuding of the Peshawar Valley Field Force of all its available transport<sup>3</sup>—a loss which seriously crippled its activity, whilst the gain to the Kuram Field Force was so insufficient for its needs that the 3rd Sikhs, a frontier regiment always well equipped, had to give up ninety of its camels, the 9th Lancers sixty out of a total of eighty,<sup>4</sup> and the 14th Bengal Lancers marched from Kuram on foot, the horses carrying five days' supplies for themselves and their riders.<sup>5</sup> Even with these economies, transport was so scarce that Macgregor had to issue orders to send on every beast, however sick and feeble, that "was able to take the road" because the army "could not afford to lose even the services of a broken-down bullock."<sup>6</sup>

Whilst Colonel Macgregor was wrestling with this initial difficulty,

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Sir M. Kennedy's Supply and Transport Report, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Viceroy's Despatch to Secretary of State, dated September 15, 1879. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Life and Opinions of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. pp. 111, 114.

<sup>5</sup> *To Kabul with the Cavalry Brigade*, p. 3, by Major Mitford.

<sup>6</sup> *Life and Opinions of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 110.

and Brigadier-General J. D. Baker, on whom had devolved the command of the Expeditionary Force's vanguard, now reinforced by the 72nd Highlanders, was preparing the road over the Shutargardan for the passage of artillery,<sup>1</sup> Sir F. Roberts was trying what diplomacy could do to divest the advance on Kabul of some of its dangers. Well aware that the news of the disturbances at Kabul had greatly excited the tribes, and hearing rumours—which apparently he was never able to verify<sup>2</sup>—as to letters from the Amir calling upon them to oppose the invaders, he summoned the leading men of the neighbouring districts to Ali Khel, and, by promises of liberal payment for all services rendered to the Expedition, enlisted, so he hoped, their interests, if not their sympathies, on his side. With the Ghilzais he came to an understanding through Allal-ud-Din, who, on the 14th of September, arrived unexpectedly on the Shutargardan, and with him Nawab Sir Ghulam Hassan Khan.

There had been much anxiety in Simla as to the safety of this distinguished Indian diplomatist. It was known that he had left Kandahar for Kabul, where he was to join Cavagnari, on the 18th of August, and it was feared that he might have fallen into the hands of the mutineers. The fear was not groundless; at one point he had had difficulty in avoiding a Kabul regiment marching down the road, and at Ghazni he had been so alarmed by the aspect of affairs that he had left the main road and continued his journey by

<sup>1</sup> "While holding the pass, two difficulties were offered to the Commissariat, one being the water-supply, and the other, forage for cattle, which could only be obtained in the smallest quantities and at exorbitant rates. The mules of the battery obtained little forage beyond the daily issue of grain. They persistently neighed and whinnied at night in consequence, and, in spite of the cold, ate up their own or their comrades' blankets, and even the hair on each other's tails." (*Recollections of the Kabul Campaign, 1879 and 1880*, by Dr. J. Duke, p. 108)

<sup>2</sup> "Ghilzais report that Amir has called upon (them) to stop all roads leading from this towards Kabul. I am trying to get one of the Amir's letters to this effect." (Telegram from General Roberts. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 55.)

a comparatively unfrequented path. Two marches from the capital he had heard of the massacre, and was just beginning to feel its effects in the hostile attitude of the people, when he was joined by Sirdar Allal-ud-Din, whom the Amir had sent to meet him, and under whose protection, avoiding Kabul, he arrived safely at the outposts of the British army on the Shutargardan. Here Allal-ud-Din proposed to turn back, but Ghulam Hassan Khan succeeded in persuading "him to come on and see what General Roberts required of him."<sup>1</sup>

The result of the meeting between the British Commander and the Ghilzai chief was an agreement by which Allal-ud-Din pledged himself to keep his people quiet and to provide as much as he could in the way of transport and supplies, and Roberts undertook to pay him two thousand rupees monthly during the continuance of the campaign, and to give him a present of three thousand in addition—all supplies, of course, to be handsomely paid for.<sup>2</sup>

Not content with taking steps to secure the good will of the chiefs and headmen of the country, Sir Frederick Roberts did his best to conciliate the people at large by issuing a proclamation calculated, so he hoped, to allay the anxiety with which they were watching his movements. In it, after stating that the object of the expedition was to take public revenge on the murderers of the Embassy, and to strengthen the authority of the Amir so long as he used it to maintain friendly relations with the British Government, he assured all, "small and great," who had taken no part in the attack on the Residency, that unless they opposed his advance they had nothing to fear from his force, and that full price and hire would be paid for all supplies and carriage brought into his camp.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> "I think all this blackmail paying is very wrong in principle, but our force is so small that it requires all such help." (*Life and Opinions of Sir C. Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 107.)

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 63.

The result of all these efforts to tranquillize the country through which Roberts's troops were about to pass was, for the moment, satisfactory; chiefs and headmen were profuse in their promises of aid, and the inhabitants of Kushi, which place was occupied by Baker on the 24th, seemed friendly; but the true temper of the people at large soon broke through the restraint which their leaders were trying to impose upon them. On the 22nd of September, a telegraph-construction convoy, escorted by a non-commissioned officer and ten men of the 5th Punjab Infantry, was waylaid near the Sirkai Kotal by a large body of Mangals and Ghilzais. The non-commissioned officer and six of his men were killed, also twenty-four linesmen and muleteers. At the same time an attack was made on the blockhouse on the top of the Kotal, and though the garrison of fifty men of the 5th Punjab Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant A. W. M'Kinstry, held its own, it was unable to be of any assistance to the convoy. Troops, however, were sent from the Shutargardan, but they arrived on the scene of the fighting to find that the enemy had disappeared, carrying off the convoy mules which were never recovered.<sup>1</sup>

The same day a rumour reached Baker of an intended attack on his camp, and, though this proved false, an attempt was made upon Karatiga, a post on the eastern side of the Sirkai Kotal, and, far and near, the attitude of the tribesmen had become so unsatisfactory that General T. E. Gordon had good reason for feeling anxious about the line of communications for the safety of which he was now responsible; and when a telegram from the Peiwar Kotal warned him that that important post was threatened, and he had hurried to the spot, and contracted, as far as possible, the space covered by the camp, he telegraphed to Roberts asking to be allowed to detain the 67th Foot. The request was refused, and Gordon, in the end, had to fall back upon the dangerous expedient of raising a levy from

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign*, by Dr. J. Duke, p. 110.



the so-called friendly tribes to supplement a force, whose inadequacy is shown by the following table :—

TABLE SHOWING TROOPS ON LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS.

Brigadier-General T. E. Gordon, C.S.I., Commanding.  
 Captain H. G. Grant, Brigade-Major.  
 Lieutenant E. Burrell, D.A.Q.M. General.  
 Major A. P. Palmer, Assistant Road Commandant.

Brigadier-General J. A. Tytler, V.C., C.B., Commanding in  
 Lower Kuram.  
 Major H. T. Jones, Brigade-Major.

ALI KHEL.

Half Battery C-4 Royal Artillery.  
 2 Companies 2-8th King's Own.

ZABARDUSHT KILLA.

11th Bengal Infantry.  
 1 Wing 21st Punjab Infantry.

PEIWAR KOTAL.

4 Companies 2-8th King's Own.

KURAM.

Half Battery C-4 Royal Artillery.  
 2 Companies 2-8th King's Own.

BADESH KHEL.

No. 1 Mountain Battery, 2 guns.  
 1 Squadron 1st Bengal Cavalry.  
 20th Punjab Infantry.

THAL.

2 Squadrons 1st Bengal Cavalry.  
 29th Punjab Infantry.

Approximate numbers 3,000 men of all ranks and eight guns.

## PREPARATIONS FOR OCCUPATION OF KABUL 49

Kohat, which had also been drained of troops to feed Roberts's force, was reinforced from Peshawar.

If General Roberts was anxious to make the Afghans believe, that the force he commanded was entering Afghanistan with the Amir's consent and for his protection, he was still more concerned to make sure that Yakub Khan recognized its friendly character, and could be trusted to act as became one who believed that his interests were bound up with those of the British Government.

With a view to forming a better judgment on this point than could be arrived at by an interchange of letters, he had written, the day after his arrival at Ali Khel, asking that a confidential agent might be deputed to converse with him and make him acquainted with the Amir's objects. In answer to this request the Mustaufi, Habibulla Khan, and the Wazir, Shah Mahomed Khan, arrived at Ali Khel, where, on the 23rd of September, they laid their master's views very frankly before the British General.

The Mustaufi, speaking for himself and his colleague, declared that the Amir was ready to do whatever the British Government wished, but that he could not conceal from himself that his people—ryots as well as soldiers—were in fear of an indiscriminate revenge. Reminded by Roberts of the tenor of his proclamation, he answered that the Afghans were too ignorant to be acted upon by proclamations, and then went on to urge that the advance of the British Force should be delayed, so as to give the Amir time to disarm the regular troops, raise new levies on a much smaller scale, and himself punish the perpetrators of the late abominable outrage. By asking for time in which to establish his power, the Amir did not mean to imply that an Afghan army, however strong, could resist the British power; but that that army was drawn from all the Afghan tribes, and, if destroyed, the whole country might rise and combine against the British and against him who was already looked upon as an infidel, because of the way in which he had thrown in his lot with the British

Government. Things might perhaps go right if the mutinous troops kept together and made a stand, but in the Amir's opinion they were more likely to raise the country, and trust for victory to the interrupting of Roberts's communications and the cutting off of his supplies; under any circumstances these would be hard to collect and winter was already not far off. The Amir's advice to delay the advance was that of a sincere friend and the best he could give, but if it was not taken, then the British Army must be strong enough to put down all opposition.

Roberts in reply acknowledged that the Amir's advice was of great importance and must be carefully considered, but the Viceroy had, from the first, taken the possibility of a general rising into account and had provided against it. The punitive force was not the only one with which the insurgents would have to reckon. The Kandahar troops were already in motion; a third force was collecting at Peshawar; and the several armies were of such strength that all Afghanistan combined could not stand against them. The Amir's advice was the advice of a friend, but he must remember that the honour of the English Government was concerned, and that the English people expected a British force to enter Kabul and mete out adequate punishment for the crime committed there. Had the Mustaufi anything further to urge?

Yes, there were other things which the Amir had bidden him mention. There were twenty-four regiments of infantry, six of cavalry, and fifty-six guns in Turkestan, where Abdur Rahman and the sons of Azim Khan were waiting their chance. Herat, too, was doubtful, and, if Abdur Rahman could ingratiate himself with the people of Herat and Turkestan, those provinces would be permanently severed from the Afghan dominions. To give the Amir time to gain over Herat and Turkestan was another reason for delaying the advance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, pp. 108, 109.

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The upshot of the interview was that Roberts took two days to consider the arguments submitted to him, and then informed the Agents that there could be no delay—firstly, because the Viceroy would be greatly distressed if any misfortune befell the Amir for lack of British support, and secondly, because the English people would never be satisfied till a British force had entered Kabul and recovered the bodies of the murdered officers and men. He trusted the Amir would be able to protect himself and maintain peace in his capital till he should arrive.<sup>1</sup>

The Afghan Ministers accepted the British General's decision as final, and having discharged their mission were in a hurry to return to their posts. Roberts would fain have kept one of them with him ; but, when they pointed out that they could ill be spared from Kabul, he did not press his wish, and only asked that some trusted servant of the Amir's might be sent to him without delay, as a sign to the people that there was no disunion between the British and the Afghan Governments.

The Agents, evidently afraid that the British might be in Kabul before them, would have left Ali Khel that evening, but, yielding to Roberts's desire that they should spend the night under his protection, put off their journey till the next morning. They were not destined, however, to rejoin their master in Kabul, for, on the 27th of September, the Amir arrived unexpectedly in Baker's camp at Kushi. He came, practically, a fugitive, without tents or equipage of any kind, and escorted only by three hundred sowars, two hundred of whom returned at once to Kabul. He had thrown in his lot definitely with the British, and could never hope to re-enter his capital except in their train, or to retain his position except with their constant support.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 110. The notes of this important interview were taken by Mr. H. M. Durand, General Roberts's political secretary.—H. B. H.

## CHAPTER VI

### Concentration of Expeditionary Force at Zargan Shahr\*

WHEN Yakub Khan wrote to General Roberts, that the catastrophe in Kabul had "utterly damaged and broken up" his State, and that he himself was "greatly distracted," and "in distress and confusion as to what he should do," he said no more than the truth.<sup>1</sup> His authority, the only tie which bound together the different parts of Afghanistan, had practically perished with the British Mission. In Kabul there were no troops on whom he could rely to support it; he was on bad terms with his Commander-in-Chief; he had little confidence in his Ministers; he knew that members of his own House were intriguing against him; and, look where he would, there seemed no quarter from which he could hope for help. Rulers of provinces were beginning to revolt,<sup>2</sup> or were themselves in danger. In the Zemindawar his uncle, Sirdar Mahomed Yusaf Khan, had shut himself up in a fort, and sent to Kandahar for assistance.<sup>3</sup> At Herat the troops had killed his most trusted servant, Fakir Ahmed Khan, the real head of the civil and military administration;<sup>4</sup> and Ayub Khan, the titular head, whilst throwing the blame of the murder on him—the Amir<sup>5</sup>—was rumoured to have instigated the deed.<sup>6</sup> And in the midst of all this turmoil and confusion, he had to decide between two courses of action neither of which could promise him security. Either he must side with the British Government against

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 53, 54.

\* See, Strategical Map, No. 1.

his troops, or he must side with his troops against the British Government.

There is no proof that he hesitated between these courses; his letters to Sir F. Roberts were consistent in their professions of loyalty to the British Alliance, and no evidence has ever been produced to confirm the rumours that, whilst undertaking to do all in his power to help the British advance, he was inciting the tribes to oppose it. Yet it is certain that both courses must have been pressed upon him; certain that he must have had to weigh one against the other; certain that he must have recognized how much was to be said against each; how little for either. If, remembering that behind the troops was the Afghan people, he threw in his lot with the men who had brought him to this miserable pass, what guarantee had he that they would accept him as their leader? Yet, if he elected to stand by his ally against his subjects, could he count upon that ally's continued fidelity to himself? So far the Indian Government had accepted his assurance that he had been powerless to protect the Mission; but how if, later on, it should listen to his enemies, who were already saying that he could have saved it had he wished to do so;<sup>1</sup> that Daud Shah's attempt to reach the Residency was a blind, his wounds a sham;<sup>2</sup> the sending out of the heir-apparent and the Koran a piece of acting which deceived no one on the spot?<sup>3</sup> How if, after he had placed himself in General Roberts's hands, that commander should give credence to the accusations of his traducers,

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

Dr. Duke, who, at the Amir's request, examined Daud Shah's wounds some weeks after they had been received, had no doubt as to their reality. He found five in the head and forehead, one above the eyes not yet healed, and some in the stomach, which, but for the thickness of his kummerband, might have proved fatal. Some at least of these injuries were received at the hands of the troops, when first they mutinied before the attack on the Residency, (Duke's *Recollections*, p. 120.)

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 85.



and from being his protector, become his judge, his jailer, perhaps his executioner? There can be no doubt that this fear, which later events were to justify, was constantly present to Yakub Khan's mind, and it was a deeply anxious man who rode into Baker's camp to claim British protection and hospitality. The immediate impulse to that decisive step was given by the news that Wali Mahomed and other Sirdars, more or less his enemies, were intending to join Roberts—the prospect of being left without the power of choosing, driving him into choice. He could not leave the city openly to betake himself to the British camp, so he spent the day in his pleasure gardens outside the walls, and, at dusk, mounted his horse, and, accompanied by Daud Shah, rode through the night up the Logar Valley to Kushi.

The desire to forestall his rival in securing Sir Frederick Roberts's ear was probably not Yakub Khan's only motive for this hasty move. His heart was still set on delaying the British advance, and he may have thought that the arguments against an immediate occupation of Kabul which he had instructed the Mustaufi and the Wazir to use in his name, would come with greater force from his own lips when, by a signal proof of his trust in British friendship, he had earned the right to ask that no steps should be taken that must bring him into collision with his subjects. This was the same miscalculation which had led him to Gandamak, and it was doomed to an equally speedy disappointment. Even before he reached Kushi, Baker had invaded the Logar Valley, and, by training his guns upon its villages, had compelled the inhabitants to surrender their precious stores of grain and fodder. He had kept the letter of Roberts's proclamation by paying for the supplies taken; he had violated its spirit, and the spirit of the agreement with Allal-ud-Din, in taking the supplies by force, and in so doing had kindled in the hearts of the men thus despoiled a fire, which, fed with ever fresh fuel, was to spread and spread till all Northern Afghanistan rose in arms against

an army that could only live by condemning its people to die of starvation.

So far from being in the mood to listen to arguments in favour of delay, Roberts was already so weary of the checks imposed upon his movements by the unprepared state of the Expeditionary Force, that he had determined to march boldly forward, trusting to the country to furnish what he lacked. As early as the 21st of September, Colonel Macgregor, who had returned to the Kuram, feeling "the need of some directing hand behind," before there could be any going forward, was dismayed to receive by telegraph "a programme of intended movements," and complained in his diary of Roberts's "forgetting or ignoring that there was (is) absolutely no carriage."<sup>1</sup> Had he written that there was but half what was needed he would have been within the truth, since only by robbing regiments of the greater part of their baggage animals, and exacting double work from the commissariat mules and camels, were the necessary supplies being collected at Kushi.

Nor were the organization and discipline of the troops more to Macgregor's satisfaction. At Karatiga, on the 29th of September, fresh from riding along the line of advance from the Kuram to the Shutargardan, he described what he had seen in bitter words:—

"The march was a lamentable instance of the carelessness and happy-go-lucky style in which we do things. There was a small advance-guard, a few men with the guns, others scattered about, and the rest in rear; no attempt was made to keep the baggage and troops within a reasonable space, and the consequence was, the whole line of march was sprawling along three times as long as it need. . . . Up through the Hazara Darakht Defile all precautions were thrown to the winds, and everything was allowed to go on as it pleased. Everyone was complaining there were no orders, and there seemed to be no head. . . . Then the march was

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Opinions of Sir C. Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 114

much too long, considering the state of the baggage-animals: it should not have been more than ten miles; it was eighteen, and many animals marched double marches from Pindi to Peshawar, and only got in late last night, were loaded at three, and did not get their loads off till nine, fifteen hours; the consequence was that fifty camels were lost, and many mules, and the inevitable result will be considerable disorganization of the train."<sup>1</sup>

Two days before this entry was made in Macgregor's diary, this same happy-go-lucky style of doing things had nearly deprived the Expedition of its commander; for, on the 27th of September, at the narrowest part of the Hazara Darakht Defile, Sir F. Roberts, riding away from the infantry part of his escort, had found his passage barred by hundreds of Afghans, and a volley from some men concealed among the rocks had severely wounded the Principal Medical Officer, Dr. Townsend, with whom he was talking at the time. Luckily, a note from the officer commanding on the Shutargardan, warning him of dangers ahead, had reached him just in time to prevent the attack coming as a surprise; and, when the infantry came up, he was able to continue his march without further molestation, the road in front of him having meanwhile been cleared of the enemy by Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald and Jemadar Shere Mahomed, who had come with eighteen men of the 92nd Highlanders and forty-five men of the 3rd Sikhs to the help of a detachment of the latter regiment which had fallen into an ambush, whilst repairing the telegraph-line.<sup>2</sup>

The country through which this disorderly advance was being conducted is one that calls for the utmost care and watchfulness. No road in Afghanistan presents greater difficulties than this "bye-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir C. Macgregor*, Vol. II. pp. 116, 117.

<sup>2</sup> "Macdonald having subsequently further distinguished himself was given a commission," and "Shere Mahomed was rewarded with the Order of Merit." (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 200.)

way" to Kabul. As far as the Shutargardan it has already been described; beyond that pass, it drops by many steep zig-zags, flanked by overhanging rocks, into the bed of a rivulet, strewn with porphyry, hornblende, and syenite pebbles of brilliant and varied hues, one of the sources of the Logar River.<sup>1</sup> Following this stream it turns sharply to the right and enters the Dobundi Defile, whose stupendous perpendicular sides draw closer and closer together till, at a point called by the local tribesmen the Dur-i-Dosukh, or Gate of Hell, they so nearly meet that men can only pass between them in single file, and baggage animals have often to be relieved of burdens too wide to squeeze through the narrow opening.<sup>2</sup> Emerging out of this gloomy fissure, the track crosses a narrow valley, then threads its way between huge fragments of rock up the face of a high hill to the Shinkai Kotal, and finally descends by a succession of stony shelves to the valley of the Logar, where, hidden in a great ravine some three miles long by half a mile wide, the numerous hamlets known by the collective name of Kushi, lie among meadows and orchards—a true "delight" to the tired traveller, whether seen as Dr. Bellew saw them in 1857 with all their trees in bloom, or as they presented themselves to Roberts's thirsty troops, teeming with ripe fruit—"grapes and apples and pears and the luscious melon."<sup>3</sup>

Sir F. Roberts joined the Advanced Guard of his Force at Kushi on the 28th of September, and the same day paid his respects to the Amir who, breaking through the etiquette usually observed at a first ceremonial visit, at once broached the question of delaying the march on Kabul, pleading earnestly for time to restore order among his troops, and dwelling on the fate which might befall his family and the families of his adherents if the terror inspired by

<sup>1</sup> *Mission to Afghanistan in 1857*, by Dr. H. W. Bellew, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> *To Kabul with the Cavalry Brigade*, by Major Mitford, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough. *Pall Mall Magazine* for February, 1899, p. 276.

the approach of an avenging army should take the form of a second outburst of popular fury.<sup>1</sup> Roberts, very unfavourably impressed by the Amir's appearance—his description of Yakub Khan differs greatly from that given by men who saw him at Gandamak—and convinced that he desired delay solely in order to mature plans for opposing the British advance, received his representations with scant sympathy, for the promise that all women and children should be given the opportunity of leaving Kabul before an attack was made on that city, was no comfort to a man who believed that his particular women and children might meanwhile have fallen victims to the popular anger against himself, which his presence in the camp of the invaders must naturally provoke. Yakub Khan's request that he should be allowed to pitch his tents, which had now come up, outside the limits of the British camp was granted; but, under colour of doing honour to his guest, Roberts took care to assign to him an escort strong enough to be a check on all his movements.<sup>2</sup>

The following morning, the General, accompanied by the Cavalry Brigade under Dunham Massy, to which were attached two companies of the 72nd Highlanders and the 5th Punjab Infantry, rode to Zargan Shahr, where he met Wali Mahomed and other Sirdars whom he desired to keep apart from the Amir. Here he interviewed some of the Logar Valley chiefs on the subject of local supplies, with regard to which he was very anxious now that personal observation had shown him that his transport was far too weak to be able to carry on all the stores collected at Kushi, even if he split his Force into two, halted every other day, and sent back the mules and camels of the first Brigade to bring up the second.<sup>3</sup> It was a relief to his mind that the headmen were able to promise a certain amount of

<sup>1</sup> Telegram of Sir F. Roberts, dated 2nd of October, 1879. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. pp. 202-204.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 206.

grain, but the very unfavourable reports of the Amir's past conduct, and the warnings against trusting him for the future poured into his ears by Wali Mahomed and his friends, made him so uneasy that, in the evening, he rode back to Kushi determined to keep a vigilant eye on the proceedings of his unwelcome guest.<sup>1</sup>

On the 1st of October, the last of the troops destined for Kabul crossed the Shutargardan, leaving Colonel G. N. Money with

No. 1 Kohat Mountain Battery, Captain H. R. L. Morgan ;

3rd Sikhs, Major C. J. Griffiths ;

A Wing 21st Punjab Infantry, Major F. W. Collis ;

to keep that pass open till snow should render the position untenable, when he was to despatch the Mountain guns and the Sikhs to Kabul, and to send back the 21st to the Kuram Valley. The next day the Kabul Expeditionary Force concentrated at Zargan Shahr, and its Commander, for the first time, was able to judge of its composition and conditions with his own eyes, and to measure its strength and resources against the opposition that it might have to overcome, and the difficulties it must certainly encounter.

#### STAFF.

Captain G. T. Pretyma, Aide-de-Camp.

„ R. Pole-Carew, Aide-de-Camp.

Colonel C. M. Macgregor, Chief of the Staff.

Major W. Galbraith, Assistant Adjutant-General.

Captain R. C. Kennedy, Assistant Quartermaster-General.

„ B. A. Combe, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.

Lieutenant C. H. M. Smith, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.

Major C. A. Gorham, Deputy Judge Advocate.

Captain R. B. McEwen, Provost Marshal.

„ E. Straton, in charge of Signalling.

#### ENGINEER DEPARTMENT.

Lieutenant Æ. Perkins, Commanding Royal Engineer.

Captain R. G. Woodthorpe, in charge of Survey.

Lieutenant F. Burn-Murdoch, in charge of Engineer Field Park.

<sup>1</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 207.



## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

## COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT.

Brigadier-General Hugh Gough.  
Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. Heathcote, Director of Transport.

## COMMISSARIAT DEPARTMENT.

Lieutenant-Colonel J. V. Hunt, Principal Commissariat Officer.

## MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

Deputy Surgeon-General S. C. Townsend, Principal Medical Officer.  
Surgeon-Major A. J. Dale.

## VETERINARY DEPARTMENT.

Veterinary-Surgeon G. A. Oliphant, Principal Veterinary Surgeon.

## POLITICAL DEPARTMENT.

Major E. G. G. Hastings, Assistant Political Officer.  
Mr. H. M. Durand, C.S., Political Secretary.

## ARTILLERY.

Lieutenant-Colonel B. L. Gordon, Commanding.  
Captain J. W. Inge, Adjutant.  
F-A, Royal Horse Artillery, Major J. C. Smyth-Windham.  
G-C, Royal Artillery, Major Sidney Parry.  
No. 2, Derajat Mountain Battery, Captain G. Swinley.  
Two Gatlings, Captain A. Broadfoot.

## ORDNANCE FIELD PARK.

Captain E. D. Shafto.

## CAVALRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General W. G. D. Massy, Commanding.  
Lieutenant J. P. Brabazon, Brigade-Major.  
1 Squadron 9th Lancers, Captain S. G. Butson.<sup>1</sup>  
5th Punjab Cavalry, Major F. Hammond.<sup>2</sup>  
12th Bengal Cavalry, Major J. H. Green.  
14th Bengal Lancers, Lieutenant-Colonel T. G. Ross.

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel R. S. Cleland arrived at Kabul later on with the two remaining squadrons of his regiment.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Major B. Williams, who was on furlough, rejoined his regiment at Kabul.—H. B. H.

## EXPEDITIONARY FORCE AT ZARGAN SHAHR 61

### 1ST INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General H. T. Macpherson, Commanding.

Captain G. de C. Morton, Brigade-Major.

67th Foot, Colonel C. B. Knowles.

72nd Highlanders, Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. J. Clarke.<sup>1</sup>

28th Punjab Infantry, Colonel J. Hudson.

### 2ND INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General T. D. Baker, Commanding.

Captain W. C. Farwell, Brigade-Major.

92nd Highlanders, Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Parker.

5th Punjab Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Macqueen.

23rd Pioneers, Lieutenant-Colonel A. A. Currie.

5th Gurkhas, Major A. FitzHugh.

No. 7 Company Sappers and Miners, Lieutenant C. Nugent.

### STRENGTH.

Officers, 192; men, 6,425, of which 2,558 were British Troops;  
18 guns, and 6,000 camp-followers.

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel F. Brownlow, who was on leave, rejoined his regiment at Kabul.—H. B. H.

## CHAPTER VII

### First Engagement at Charasiab

THE experience gained in the advance on Zargan Shahr destroyed all hope of keeping the army intact. Seven hundred and fifty camels, two thousand mules, a hundred donkeys, and six hundred and fifty bullocks were so clearly incapable of carrying the baggage and supplies of six thousand six hundred men,<sup>1</sup> that even Macgregor had to accept the necessity of splitting the Force into two parts, and marching on alternate days. The danger of such a division in the case of troops operating *en l'air*, because too weak to maintain their communication by establishing fortified posts in their rear, had already been placed beyond dispute by the news that the Ghilzais had occupied the Shinkai Kotal and were threatening Money's none too strong entrenchments on the Shutargardan.

In accordance with the new arrangement, only the Cavalry and the First Brigade left Zargan Shahr on the 4th of October. The advance was over an arid plain, deeply scarred by dried-up drainage lines, a plain described by Macgregor as a land of *sugs and sangs*—dogs and stones—till, on rounding a spur of the hills on the right of the valley, the Logar River came in sight, crossing the road from west to east before turning northward in the direction of Kabul. On reaching its banks, its actual stream was found to be about a

<sup>1</sup> Equivalent to the carrying powers of 2,125 camels. The Central Asia Russian Expeditionary Forces are, as a rule, equipped with one camel for each fighting man.—H. B. H.

couple of hundred feet wide, spanned by a bridge too narrow for the guns, so they and the troops crossed by a deep ford,<sup>1</sup> leaving the bridge for the use of the transport. This relief, however, failed to avert confusion and delay. The approach to the river ran between high banks, and long before the bridge was reached, hundreds of animals of all sorts and sizes got mixed up in a struggling, frightened mass, out of which, after dark, marauders succeeded in snatching many a load of booty. It was midnight before the last bullock limped into camp, which had been pitched about two miles from the river, near the hamlet of Safed Sang. Here, Commissariat officers were waiting to pick out the strongest of the weary beasts, equivalent in carrying power to twelve hundred camels.<sup>2</sup> These were at once fed and after a few hours' rest sent back to Zargan Shahr, where Baker, anxious to get the march of his Brigade over by daylight, was eagerly awaiting their arrival. The start was quickly made, but progress was so slow that the head of the column only entered Roberts's camp at eight o'clock in the evening, and its tail some five hours later.<sup>3</sup>

The Natives had again shown themselves hostile, so, before dawn the next day, a force surrounded the village of Koti Khel, whose inhabitants were known to have been specially active in harassing the troops, and some of whom had wounded Captain Kennedy of the Quartermaster-General's Department. Three villagers were killed on the spot and five captured, three of whom were shot by Roberts's orders, for being in unlawful rebellion against their sovereign.<sup>4</sup>

At Safed Sang, Roberts heard from Colonel Money that he had repulsed an attack on his camp, and heliographed back hearty

<sup>1</sup> "Some of the men were swept off their feet by the force of the current; but, as the stream was only fifty or sixty yards in width, no lives were lost." (Hensman's *Afghanistan* 1879-80, p. 24.)

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 124, also Hensman's *Afghanistan* 1879-80, p. 26.

congratulations and the promise of additional supplies of food and ammunition to be sent up to him by Gordon.<sup>1</sup>

From this point he also issued the following proclamation to the People of Kabul :—" Be it known to all that the British army is advancing on Kabul to take possession of the city. If it be allowed to do so peacefully, well and good ; if not, the city will be seized by force. Therefore all well-disposed persons, who have taken no part in the dastardly murder of the British Embassy, or in the plunder of the Residency, are warned that if they are unable to prevent resistance being offered to the entrance of the British Army and to the authority of his Highness the Amir, they should make immediate arrangements for their own safety, either by coming into the British Camp or by such measures as may seem fit to them. And as the British General does not make war on women and children, warning is given that all women and children should be removed from the city beyond the reach of harm. The British Government desires to treat all classes with justice, and to respect their religion, feelings, and customs, while exacting full retribution from offenders. Every effort will therefore be made to prevent the innocent suffering with the guilty. But it is necessary that the utmost precaution should be taken against useless opposition. Therefore after the receipt of this proclamation, all persons found armed in or about Kabul will be treated as the enemies of the British Government ; and, further, it must be clearly understood that if this entry of the British force is resisted, I cannot hold myself responsible for any accidental mischief which may be done to persons and property, even of well-disposed people who may have neglected this warning.

" October the 2nd, 1879."

<sup>1</sup> " The General congratulates you heartily ; husband your ammunition and supplies, and go in at the brutes. General Gordon has been ordered to send you per man one hundred rounds ammunition more, and more supplies." (Heliogram from Macgregor to Money.)

## FIRST ENGAGEMENT AT CHARASIAB 65

It was now the turn of Macpherson's Brigade, to which were attached 3 Field guns and a squadron of Cavalry, to remain stationary, whilst Baker's, reinforced by the 92nd Highlanders, moved on another stage, fortunately so short a one that there was no need to strike camp before 11 a.m., thus securing a little additional rest to the transport animals, many of whom had just done forty-five miles in thirty-six hours.<sup>1</sup> The march proved an easy one, the road running parallel to, but out of sight of the Logar, through a fairly open, cultivated country. About midway, near the village of Chilhal Dukhteran (Forty Daughters), some low hills were crossed, on which squatted numerous groups of armed men, watching the advance of the Force with the same air of indifference displayed by the Mangals just before they fell upon Roberts's rear-guard in the Mangiar Pass.<sup>2</sup> Beyond these hills, a much higher, crescent-shaped range came into view. A group of hamlets, known collectively as the village of Charasiab,<sup>3</sup> lies at the foot of this crescent's south-western horn, whilst the north-eastern horn is pierced by the Sang-i-Nawishta Gorge,<sup>4</sup> the deep ravine through which the Logar forces its way into the Kabul Valley. About two miles north-east of Charasiab, near the village of Khairabad, the Kushi road divides into two branches, one of which first crosses

<sup>1</sup> Hensman's *Afghanistan*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> "A private of the 72nd . . . particularly pointed these men out to me, remarking: 'You see, Sir, those men sitting there, doing nothing; well, that is just the way the Mangals sat and looked at us when they afterwards caught us in the Mangiar Pass.'" (Duke's *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign*, 1879-80, pp. 131, 132. See, also, Second Volume of this History, p. 100.)

<sup>3</sup> This, not Charasia, is the correct spelling. The name means Four Water Mills. Mitford, in his interesting book *To Kabul with the Cavalry Brigade*, mentions that "these mills, which are much valued by the Afghans, frequently give the name to a village or district; e.g. Haft Asiab—the Seven Water Mills."—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> Sang-i-Nawishta—Written Stone—so named from a stone bearing a written inscription, stating that the road was made in the reign of the Emperor Shah Jehan. Major Mitford mentions that "this stone was afterwards removed to the front of Sir F. Roberts's quarters in Sherpore" (p. 24).



the valley from east to west and then runs due north, past the village of Indaki, in the Chardeh Valley, to Kabul, whilst the other reaches that city by following the course of the Logar River.<sup>1</sup> A number of small detached hills scattered about the lower end of the valley, within musketry range of each other, added to the defensibility of the position, and the final touch was given to its strength by the stony slope, like a natural glacis, over which each of these detached hills would have to be approached.

Charasiab had been reached early in the afternoon, and while the troops were encamping in the fallow fields to the South of that village, Cavalry patrols pushed right up to the mouth of the Sang-i-Nawishta Defile without discovering any signs of the presence of an enemy. From rising ground within the village, the General and his Chief of the Staff obtained a good view of the whole position, and noted the importance of a conical hill on the east of the valley, by which the approach to the gorge was commanded. Macgregor desired the immediate seizure of this point,<sup>2</sup> but Roberts, for once the more cautious of the two, wisely decided to put off occupying it till the next day.<sup>3</sup>

Towards evening groups of Afghans were noticed on the sky line of many of the hills, a sure sign of mischief brewing; <sup>4</sup> nevertheless, the night passed quietly, and it was with no expectation of serious resistance that a working party consisting of

2 Guns No. 2 Mountain Battery,  
284 Rifles 92nd Highlanders,  
450 Rifles 23rd Pioneers,

<sup>1</sup> A second road leads to the Chardeh Valley, starting from Charasiab and piercing the hill to the west of the village, but no use of it was made during the action.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> "Now, more than ever, I felt the want of sufficient transport! Had it been possible to have the whole of the force with me, I should have advanced at once, and have occupied that evening the range of hills I have described; but Macpherson's Brigade was still a march behind, and all I could do was, immediately on arrival, to send back every available transport animal to bring it up." (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 211.)

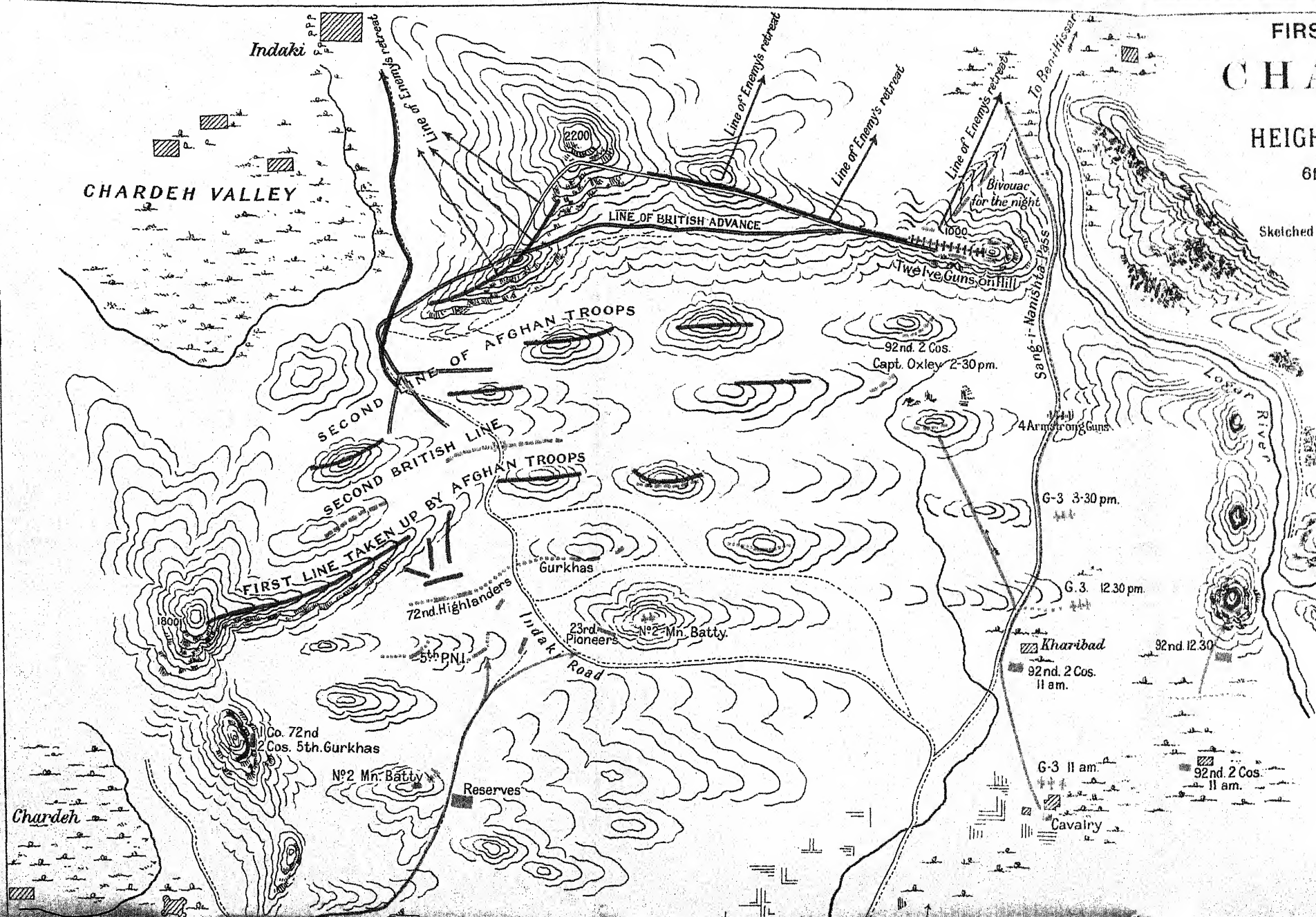
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 212.

# FIRST ACTION OF CHARASIAB

ON THE  
HEIGHTS NEAR KABUL

6th October, 1879.

Sketched by Lieutenant Fred Spratt, R.E.,  
D.A.Q.M.Gen.



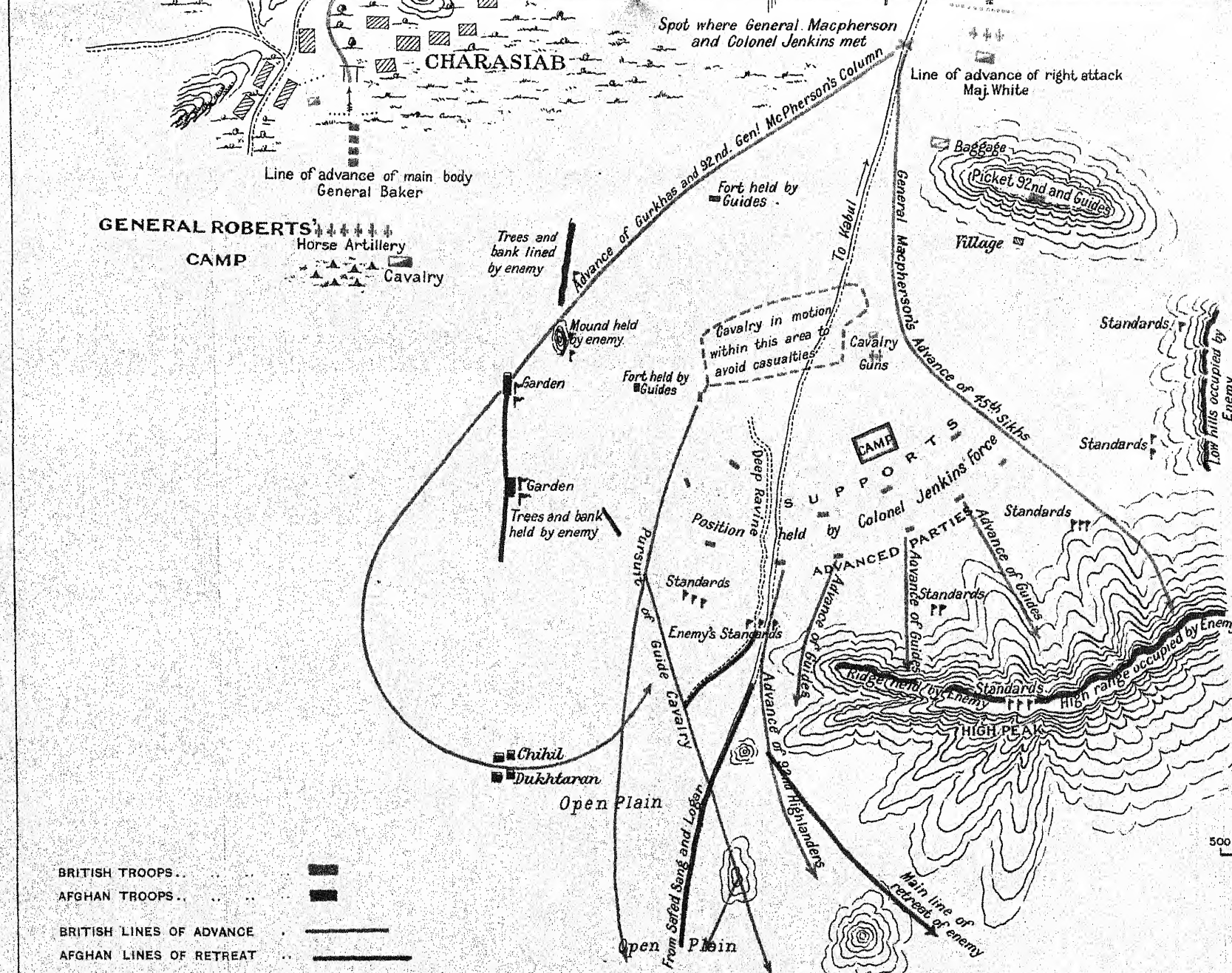
## SECOND ACTION OF CHARASIAB

25th April, 1880.

Sketched by Lieutenant-Colonel G. Stewart,  
Corps of Guides.

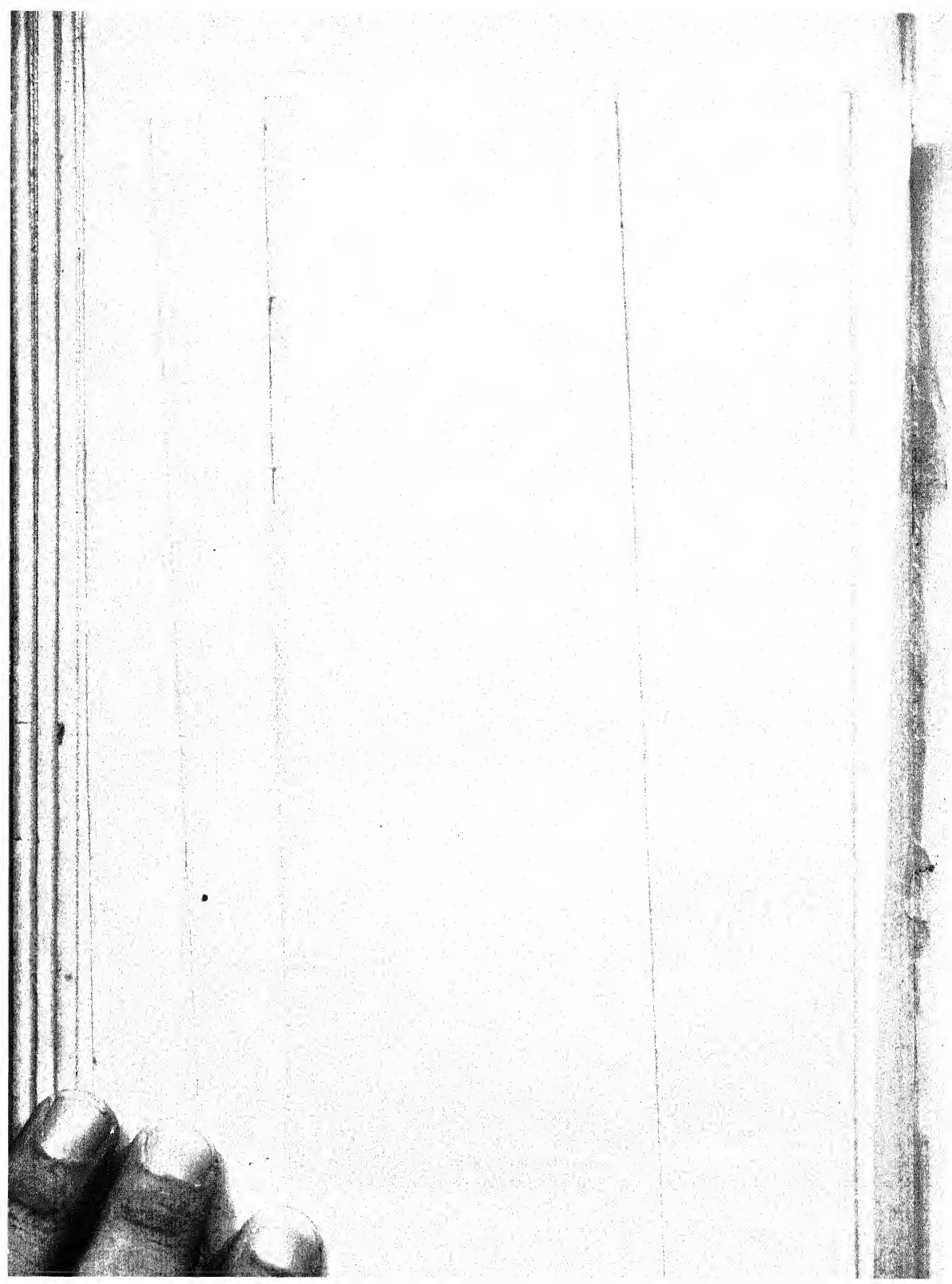
NOTE.—The figures give the heights  
above the plain.

See Page 286.



BRITISH TROOPS. . . . .  
AFGHAN TROOPS. . . . .  
BRITISH LINES OF ADVANCE . . . . .  
AFGHAN LINES OF RETREAT . . . . .





under Colonel Currie, set out early in the morning, preceded by Cavalry patrols, to render the road practicable for artillery. The discovery, made almost immediately, that a formidable force was preparing to dispute the passage of the defile with the punitive expedition, came, therefore, with a shock of surprise to the General and all under his command. Both sides of the Nawishta Defile were found to be crowned by the enemy, whose right extended to the heights dividing the Logar from the Chardeh Valley. The coolness and skill with which important points were being occupied and guns placed in position, revealed the presence of regular troops and a well-prepared scheme of opposition to the British advance,<sup>1</sup> whilst tribesmen swarming on the hills, on both sides of the British camp, pointed to an attack to be made upon it at the first favourable moment.

In this emergency, four courses were open to the British Commander: he could fall back on the range of low hills lying midway between Charasiab and Safed Sang, with a view to the quickest possible concentration of his entire force; he might entrench his present camp and there await the arrival of Macpherson's Brigade; he might try to draw the Afghans from their strong position by tactics similar to those so successfully used by Charles Gough at Futtehabad;<sup>2</sup> or he might elect to drive them out of it by an immediate direct attack. Against the first plan had to be placed the doubt whether the hills in question were not already in the hands of the enemy,<sup>3</sup> and the certainty that, as the bulk of the transport had been sent away to bring up Macpherson's Brigade, a retreat, however short, would mean the abandonment of a large part of the baggage and stores. The second plan was condemned by the situation of the camp, overlooked on all sides by hills in the occupation of the enemy, and by the lack of time

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch, dated October 20th, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> See, Second Volume of this History, p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> A report had reached Roberts that Macpherson's Brigade had been intercepted and that it and its long string of camels would certainly be opposed. (See *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 214.)

to put it into a proper state of defence before nightfall, as the troops would be too busy covering the Sappers and Miners to be able to give them much assistance in their work. The objection to the third scheme—one generally successful against undisciplined men—lay, firstly, in the possibility that the Afghans had, for once, a leader capable of seeing through it, and strong enough to compel his followers to keep out of the net spread to ensnare them; secondly, in the probability that, if the plan succeeded, Currie's tiny column would be swept away by the downward rush of the Afghans; and, thirdly, in the knowledge that, if it failed, the position of the camp at night would be worse than if the second plan had been the one adopted. The last plan had against it the immense risks attendant on pitting a small force, with nothing to fall back upon in case of failure, against a large one in an exceptionally strong position; and, in its favour, the superiority given to the former by the skill of its officers and the discipline of its men, and the moral effect which often waits upon bold and rapid action. These considerations determined Roberts's choice, and, once made, he acted on it with his customary vigour and decision.

To strengthen the troops in rear and to afford additional protection to the fifteen hundred baggage animals which, under the escort of two companies of the 5th Gurkhas, had gone back the previous evening to bring them up, he despatched a squadron of Cavalry to Safed Sang, and, with this reinforcement, sent urgent orders to Macpherson to strain every nerve to join him at Charasiab before dark. To Baker he entrusted, unreservedly, the task of dislodging the enemy and driving him back upon Kabul, and for that purpose he assigned to him the following troops:—

## LEFT COLUMN.

4 Guns No. 2 Mountain Battery	. . . . .	Captain G. Swinley.
12th Bengal Cavalry, 25 Sabres.		
2 Gatlings	. . . . .	Captain A. Broadfoot.

# FIRST ENGAGEMENT AT CHARASIAB 69

72nd Highlanders, . . . .	700 Rifles	. Lt.-Colonel W. H. Clarke.
Half Battalion 5th Gurkhas .	300 Rifles	. Major FitzHugh.
Half Battalion 5th Punjab Infantry, 300 Rifles		. Captain C. McK. Hall
No. 7 Company Sappers and Miners, 100 Rifles		. Lieutenant C. Nugent.
Total strength 1,400 Rifles, 25 Sabres, and 6 Guns.		

The working party, which, reinforced from camp, had now become the right wing of the attacking force, was thus constituted :—

## RIGHT COLUMN.

G-3 Royal Artillery, 3 Guns	. . .	. Major Sidney Parry.
9th Lancers . . . .	20 Sabres	. Lieutenant H. W. Apperley.
14th Bengal Lancers)	. . .	. Major R. C. Mitford.
5th Punjab Cavalry)	120 Sabres	. Major F. Hammond.
92nd Highlanders, 284 Rifles . . . .		. Major G. White and Major J. C. Hay.
23rd Pioneers, 550 Rifles . . . .		. Captain H. Paterson.
Total strength 834 Rifles, 140 Sabres, and 3 Guns.		

Roberts instructed its commander, Colonel Currie, to take up a defensive position and to consider himself thenceforward under Baker's orders.<sup>1</sup>

When all these arrangements had been made there remained under the General's own command, for the defence of the camp and to be used as a reserve in case of need, only the Battery of Horse Artillery, 450 Cavalry, and between 600 and 700 Infantry<sup>2</sup> made up of Highlanders, Punjabis, and Pioneers ; in all, including the gunners, hardly 1,250 men and six guns. In its character of feeder of the fighting forces, it was almost immediately drawn upon by Baker, who, after reconnoitring the enemy's position, had decided to leave his reserve ammunition at a convenient spot within the precincts of the village, and heliographed to Roberts to increase the strength of the small guard

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch of the 20th October.

<sup>2</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 216.

From the strength of all the columns some deduction must be made for sick and non-effectives.—H. B. H.



he was placing over it. A hundred men of the 5th Punjab Infantry were at once despatched to Charasiab, followed by the rest of the regiment as soon as sufficient transport for the carrying of its ammunition could be procured; a necessary step, but one which reduced by several hundreds the troops available for the protection of the camp.<sup>1</sup>

Baker's reconnaissance had shown him that the enemy's first line occupied a bare, rocky ridge of no great height, beginning about a mile north of Charasiab and ending to the east of the Indaki road; that, five hundred yards further back, their second line was drawn along a chain of detached, but mutually supporting hills, stretching from a little west of the Indaki road to the centre of the valley; and that, behind these detached hills, rose a still more formidable position in the shape of an unbroken ridge, two and a half miles long, which, culminating at its most northerly point in a peak 2,200 feet high, embraced in its irregular curve the whole of the lower end of the Logar Valley and both the roads leading to Kabul. This formidable position was only accessible in a few places and it commanded the entire front of Baker's advance.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing the necessity of bringing as large a force as possible to bear upon the enemy's weakest point, which his observation had proved to be at the western side of the valley—the bulk of the Afghans were massed on the heights at its north-eastern extremity—Baker summoned Colonel Currie to join him with four hundred and fifty rifles of the 23rd Pioneers, and at the same time ordered Major G. White, who now succeeded to the command of a dangerously weakened body of troops, to move forward to within artillery range of the Sang-i-Nawishta Gorge, and, in so doing, to keep on the alert, lest, when he—Baker—advanced to

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch of the 20th October, 1879.

“The remainder of the regiment were sent out soon after, though this left the camp very weakly guarded, only 1,000 cavalry and infantry, with 6 9-pounder guns being left at headquarters.” (Hensman, p. 31.)

<sup>2</sup> Despatch of the 20th October.

the assault, the Afghans should sweep down upon Charasiab through the wide gap lying between the two British columns. Once within artillery range of the Sang-i-Nawishta Gorge, White was to halt whilst the main attack was being developed, and as soon as he saw the Afghans retreating, not a moment sooner, he was to push his cavalry through the defile, so as to close it to the fugitives.

About 11.30, Baker's column issued from the shelter of the wooded enclosure by which Charasiab is surrounded, and in a very short time the 72nd Highlanders were engaged with the Afghans; one company, under Captain R. H. Brooke-Hunt, trying to drive them from the heights on the right of their (the Afghans') position, whilst the rest of the regiment, under cover of the mountain guns, delivered a direct attack on its centre. Both onsets were made with great courage and determination, but, in each case, the weight of the attack was too light to make any impression on the obstinate resistance offered to it, till Baker, seeing that little progress was being made, sent two companies of the 5th Gurkhas to the help of Brooke-Hunt, and other two, under Major FitzHugh, and two hundred men of the 5th Punjab Infantry, under Captain Hall, to reinforce the main body of the Highlanders. The effect of this addition to the British strength at once became apparent to the Afghans on the other side of the valley, who, now alive to the fact that a British success at this point would jeopardize their whole position, poured down in crowds to the aid of their overmatched comrades. The result was a race for the disputed position between the two opposing forces, a race in which the assailants won; for, at sight of the swiftly approaching Afghan reinforcements, the British troops redoubled their efforts, and almost simultaneously swept the western hills clear of the enemy and carried the whole of his first line of defence, though, to the last, the Afghans disputed every inch of ground, gathering in groups behind the rocks scattered over the surface of the ridge, and charging out upon their pursuers with a fury which carried

them once to within thirty yards of the Gurkhas, who, no less brave, received them with a steady fire under which, at the last moment, they wavered and broke. Lieutenant A. R. Martin, adjutant of the regiment, specially distinguished himself on this occasion.<sup>1</sup>

Covered by the mountain guns and gatlings—the latter soon jammed—the 72nd Highlanders and the 5th Gurkhas, led by Lieutenant D. Chesney with a company of the 23rd Pioneers, now advanced to the capture of the enemy's second line of defence. In a few bold rushes, they crossed the five or six hundred yards lying between it and them, and as they dashed upon its centre two companies of the 92nd Highlanders under Captain R. H. Oxley, belonging to White's Force, fell unexpectedly upon its left flank. Confused by the double attack, the Afghans split up into two, their right flying towards Indaki, pursued by a wing of the 72nd under Major C. M. Stockwell, their left falling back on their main position. But here they offered no such stubborn resistance as had marked the defence of their first line, the fear of being taken in reverse—two companies of the 23rd Pioneers had quickly gained a footing on the ridge—and the temptation to avail themselves of the many avenues of escape open to them, proving too strong for men with nerves already shaken by defeat. A few of the better disciplined troops joined their comrades still holding out on either side the Nawishta Gorge, but the greater number were soon in full flight—some hurrying back to Kabul over the hills, others taking advantage of the British lack of Cavalry to dash across the open ground at their foot to the shelter of the Chardeh Valley<sup>2</sup>; and, by 3.45, the whole of the centre and right of their strong position was in Baker's hands.

To explain the timely help afforded to the left British Column

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch of the 20th October.

<sup>2</sup> "The want of Cavalry was here painfully apparent, as the retreating masses of the Afghans could easily have been overtaken, the sloping ground between Indaki and the hills being admirably suited for a pursuit." (Hensman, p. 33.)

by the right, the latter's fortunes must now be followed, from the moment when its commander received instructions to get his artillery within range of the Nawishta Gorge, and to hold his cavalry in readiness to dash through it at the first sign of a weakening of the enemy. White's first act was to push forward the patrols of the 9th Lancers and 14th Bengal Cavalry, which, early in the day, had fallen back on finding themselves in the presence of a strongly posted Afghan army, and to support them by two companies of the 92nd Highlanders, whose commander, Captain Oxley, was directed to drive in the pickets immediately in his front; his second, to order Parry to shell a hill, swarming with Afghans, on the British right flank, with the three guns G-3 Royal Artillery. Oxley soon drove in the pickets, but shell after shell burst in vain over the crest of the hill. Protected by a strong line of sangars the Afghans stood steadfastly to their standards, crouching as they saw the guns sighted and after each discharge springing to their feet with derisive cheers to pour a volley into their opponents below.<sup>1</sup>

Perceiving that neither artillery nor infantry fire had any practical effect upon the enemy, White determined to storm the position in person. At the head of Captain H. F. Cotton's company of the 92nd Highlanders, he promptly scaled the hill, and, in the teeth of a volley which laid low five of his men, clambered over the breastwork, and fell upon the Afghans who, incontinently, gave up the game and ran for their lives.<sup>2</sup> The capture of this hill gave White's troops some security on their right; nevertheless their position during the halt that followed was one of great peril; and had the forces opposed to them been composed of tribesmen fighting in the

<sup>1</sup> Duke's *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign*, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> "The dark green kilts went up the steep, rocky hill-side at a fine rate, though one would occasionally drop and roll several feet down the slope. . . . Both sides took advantage of every available atom of cover, but still the kilts pressed on and up, and it was altogether as pretty a piece of Light Infantry drill as could well be seen." (Major Mitford, p. 26.)

way natural to mountaineers, they would probably have been overwhelmed. Luckily, their opponents were sepoys, just sufficiently trained to have forgotten their old tactics, but not disciplined enough to profit by the advantage conferred on them by their numbers and the strength of their artillery ; so the interval, during which victory might have been theirs, remained unused, and when White, observing that Baker's attack was making good progress, ordered a general advance, their opportunity had gone by for ever.<sup>1</sup>

The order to advance was quickly executed. Oxley, with two companies of the 92nd, wheeled to his left to assist Baker's troops in capturing the enemy's second line of defence ; a small detachment of the same regiment stormed another isolated hill on White's right ; and Major Hammond, leaving the 14th Bengal Lancers to escort the guns, pressed forward with the 9th Lancers and 5th Punjab Cavalry, and after seizing two pieces of cannon at the mouth of the Sang-i-Nawishta Gorge, penetrated nearly to its centre. Here, finding that the enemy had crossed the river and taken shelter among the precipitous hills rising abruptly from its right bank, he halted to allow Major Hay to come up with the infantry, consisting of a company of the 92nd under Lieutenant D. F. Gordon, and Paterson's detachment of the 23rd Pioneers. These troops had followed hard on the heels of the cavalry till, on arriving at the foot of the steep conical hill, the importance of which had been noted by Roberts and Macgregor, they discovered that they had got on the flank of a Battery of Armstrongs, so well concealed by the inequalities of the ground that the Lancers had ridden past it without suspecting its existence. Eager to outstrip each other, Scot and Sikh raced for the prize, and the Afghan gunners fled without firing a shot.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Our comparatively small loss and easy victory were, no doubt, due to the fact of the enemy opposing us being chiefly composed of sepoys, who do not fight like the mass of the people we had opposed to us afterwards." (Duke's *Recollections*, pp. 143, 144.)

<sup>2</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, p. 138.

# FIRST ENGAGEMENT AT CHARASIAB 75

The Highlanders then climbed the hill, killed its few remaining defenders, and captured twelve mountain guns in position near its summit, whilst the Pioneers joined the Cavalry, and the two together pushed up the gorge to its narrowest point, where they bivouacked near a small mud fort.<sup>1</sup>

By 5 p.m. Baker had collected the scattered units of his force, joined hands with White's column, and made his dispositions for the night. The 5th Punjab Infantry and Currie's Pioneers bivouacked in the plain on the Kabul side of the enemy's main position; the 72nd Highlanders, the 5th Gurkhas, and the Mountain Battery on the heights above the gorge. No water was procurable, and for a time the wounded suffered from lack of attendance, as the Field Hospital did not come up till 2 o'clock the next morning.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, as will be seen from the accompanying Table, they were but few, remarkably few, considering the strength of the positions taken by direct assault :—

## KILLED AND WOUNDED IN THE ACTION OF CHARASIAB.

### OFFICERS.

Lieutenant C. H. Fergusson, 72nd Highlanders, wounded.  
 Captain C. Young, 5th Punjab Infantry, severely wounded.  
 Surgeon A. Duncan, 23rd Pioneers, dangerously wounded.

### MEN.

	<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>
9th Lancers . . . . .	0	1
5th Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	1	2
72nd Highlanders . . . . .	4	34
92nd Highlanders . . . . .	4	10
23rd Pioneers . . . . .	1	2
5th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	4	4
5th Gurkhas . . . . .	4	10
7th Company Sappers and Miners . . . . .	0	2
Total . . . . .	18	65

Five dhoolie-bearers were also killed and four wounded.

<sup>1</sup> Regimental Records, 5th Punjab Cavalry, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, p. 144.



From information subsequently received, it was ascertained that the Afghan forces engaged at Charasiab consisted of thirteen regiments of regular troops supplemented by contingents from the city and adjacent villages, under the command of the Amir's uncle, Sirdar Nek Mahomed Khan, whose lieutenants were Generals Mahomed Kazim Khan, Ghulam Hyder Khan, Afzul Khan, and the Governor of Khost, Sirdar Mahomed Zaman Khan. Their losses Roberts estimated at three hundred men killed and many wounded. Duke states that fewer than a hundred bodies were counted on the field, and that local reports placed the total number of the dead and wounded at about five hundred, but, as all the latter, and probably many of the former, were carried off by their retreating comrades, it is impossible to say which guess came the nearer to the truth.

Great as were the anxieties borne, that 6th day of October, by Baker and White, they were less than those which weighed upon their Commander. To watch for hours the fluctuations of a fight—so near as to be able to note individual acts of gallantry<sup>1</sup>—to know that one can do nothing to determine its issue, that all the troops one could give, have been given, and that those left behind are too few to provide a sure refuge for themselves and their comrades in case the attack should fail, as more than once seemed likely, needs a higher courage and stronger powers of endurance than to direct an engagement or lead a storming column; and no man could have gone through the ordeal more bravely than Sir Frederick Roberts. Racked with fear for the safety of his troops, of his sick, of his stores, of the thousands

<sup>1</sup> In his account of the battle of Charasiab, Lord Roberts mentions having watched a young soldier, Private MacMahon of the 72nd Highlanders, scramble up the crags at the head of a few Gurkhas with whom, on reaching the summit, he charged home with the bayonet. For this act of gallantry MacMahon received the Victoria Cross. (*Forty-One Years in India*, pp. 218, 219.)

In his despatch Roberts also mentions the gallant conduct of Lieutenant R. A. Grant, who with a small party of the 92nd Highlanders had dislodged a body of the enemy, who were causing much annoyance to one of the outlying pickets.—H. B. H.

of camp-followers who looked to him for protection, he attended calmly to every detail by which the peril could be lightened, sending out cavalry patrols, to drive off the tribesmen, establishing strongly fortified outposts, and seeing to it that the work of putting the camp into a state of defence went on without intermission. All that he did was well done, but inexpressible must have been his relief when the danger, against which he was providing, had been dispelled, and the road to Kabul lay clear before him.

## OBSERVATION

Sir F. Roberts's temerity in leaving behind him a great mountain barrier and invading a hostile country with a weak force, equipped with hardly half its proper complement of transport, recalls the recklessness of Sir John Keane when, in 1842, he marched on Kabul without his heavy guns, though he knew that the strong fortress of Ghazni lay between him and his goal. Both commanders escaped the natural consequences of their rashness, but both invited the censure passed on the elder of the two by Sir Henry Durand, when commenting on the success which crowned Keane's illegitimate tactics, and the rewards which it earned for him :—

“A grateful country may on such an occasion pour forth its titles and its honours, not making men's merits the measure of its bounty ; but it will nevertheless act wisely in remembering that war has its principles, and that to hazard, heedless of military prudence, soldiers' lives and a country's fame upon a gamester's throw is to court a stern rebuke.”<sup>1</sup>

What made Roberts's march specially censurable was the absence of any urgent necessity for incurring the risks he elected to run. His object was not to bring succour to the living but to avenge the dead, and vengeance could have waited till those deputed to execute it were

<sup>1</sup> *The First Afghan War*, by Durand, p. 184.

properly organized for the task. Possibly the question of time did enter into the Indian Government's decision to abandon its original plan of occupying Kabul simultaneously with *two* forces, the one advancing by the Khyber, the other by the Shutargardan; but it cannot have contemplated sending *one* into Afghanistan under conditions opposed to "military prudence," and certainly the Commander-in-Chief believed Roberts to have all the transport he needed.

There is a passage in one of Napoleon's letters<sup>1</sup> to his brother Joseph which is so applicable to this march on Kabul as to deserve to be quoted in full.

The King of Spain had conceived a plan for the occupation of Madrid, which involved the abandonment of his communications and the placing of a deep and lofty chain of mountains between him and France, and the greatest of strategists rejected this scheme in the following pungent words:—

"The proposal is to march on Madrid with 50,000 men, keeping them together, and abandoning all communications with France.

"The art of war is an art founded on principles which must not be violated. . . . To lose one's line of operations is a movement so dangerous that to be guilty of it is a crime. To preserve it is necessary in order to avoid being separated from one's depôt, which is the point of rendezvous, and the place to which one's prisoners, wounded, and sick are to be sent. . . . But at this instant to rush into the interior of Spain, without any organized centre or magazines, with hostile armies on one's flanks and in one's rear, would be an attempt without precedent in the history of the world.

"If, before Madrid was taken, and depôts of subsistence for eight or ten days and of ammunition were provided, this army were beaten, what would become of it? Where would it rally? Where would it send its wounded? whence would it draw its supplies? For it is only provided for its current wants. Nothing more need be said.

<sup>1</sup> September 16th, 1808.

Those who dare to recommend such a step would be the first to lose their heads as soon as the results began to show its absurdity. . . . This scheme, opposed as it is to all the rules of war, must be given up. A general who attempted such an operation would commit a crime."

The one point in which this stern condemnation does not apply to the author of the march through the Logar Valley, is the prediction that those who would dare to recommend such an operation would be the first to lose their heads when brought face to face with its results. Whatever might have been the case with Joseph Bonaparte, Sir Frederick Roberts kept his head, and by his decision and coolness in the hour of peril averted the catastrophe which his rashness had invited. "To Baker and White," to quote Macgregor's generous words, "belong principally the honours of the fight,"<sup>1</sup> but it is questionable whether that fight would have proved a victory, if these officers, and not only they, but every man under their orders, had not felt the inspiring influence of their commander's indomitable courage, and unshakable confidence in himself and them.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 125.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Operations before Kabul

EARLY on the morning of the 7th October, the march was resumed. Roberts led the way with the Cavalry and a portion of the 2nd Brigade ; Baker and the remainder of his troops followed a few hours later ; whilst Macpherson, who had arrived in camp the previous evening too late to take part in the action, remained a second night at Charasiab. Except in the Gorge, no resistance was offered and there the Infantry easily swept it aside. So far as distance was concerned, Kabul might have been reached that day ; but as it was unsafe to approach too near the city till the whole force was at its commander's disposal, the halt was made at Ben-i-Hissar, a large village lying two miles to the south-east of the Bala Hissar. Cavalry patrols that had pushed on ahead of the Brigade, returned to report that, so far as they could judge, both the Citadel and the city were deserted by the enemy, and from the chief merchants of the town, who came in to visit him, Roberts learned that the Afghan troops, reinforced by some of the townspeople, had withdrawn to the hills behind the city. With morning came the news that they had abandoned the Sherpur cantonments and were falling back in the direction of Ghazni. To cut their line of retreat, Roberts despatched Dunham Massy, with 725 sabres, in such haste that there was no time to properly provision either men or horses.

Keeping the Bala Hissar and Kabul on their left, Massy and his men galloped nearly north, through a richly cultivated country, studded

with fortified villages, crossed the Siah Sang plateau and descended to Sherpur, to find that the Afghans had left behind them seventy-three pieces of cannon of different calibres, and five howitzers, but had blown up the magazine, the explosion damaging a corner of the cantonments' defences. Looking westward, they could see that the enemy, with guns, was still strongly entrenched on the heights overlooking the city and the Deh-i-Mazang Gorge, through which the Kabul River breaks its way from the Chardeh into the Kabul Valley. After heliographing these important facts to Roberts, Massy detached two squadrons to watch the open country, and with the remainder of his little force started afresh to carry out the main object of his expedition. In front of him, stretching for three miles north-westward, from the Deh-i-Mazang Gorge to the Nanachi Pass, lay a steep, rocky ridge, a thousand feet high, known as the Asmai Heights. The shortest way into the Chardeh Valley is by the Aliabad Pass, which pierces the ridge very near its centre; but thinking that road would, probably, be closed against him, Massy took the longer route, through the wider and shallower depression which separates the Asmai Heights from the chain of hills to which they really belong. In the Pass, five villagers, apparently on the way to join the enemy, were captured, and on their reporting that everything was quiet in the Chardeh Valley, were pressed into the British service as guides. Once through the gap, Dunham Massy wheeled his men sharply to the left, and as they rode down the reverse side of the Heights they were fired into by unseen foes. No one was hurt; but for a moment there was some confusion, taking advantage of which the prisoners made a dash for freedom. Easily overtaken, they were at once brought back and shot.<sup>1</sup> Leaving the bodies of these unfortunates in the "sheltered

<sup>1</sup> Major Mitford, *With the Cavalry Brigade to Kabul*, pp. 44, 45. Hensman, however, gives a different version of this incident. "They," the five villagers, he writes, "treacherously fired into the Lancers after having salaamed to them as they passed"; but Major Mitford, who was second in command of the Lancers, would certainly not have omitted to mention an excuse for the shooting



nook " which had witnessed their execution, the Cavalry galloped on till they came in sight of the Afghans encamped near the village of Deh-i-Mazang just where the Ghazni road emerges from the Gorge of the Kabul River. Bearing to the right, Massy struck the same road some distance to the west of the camp, and across it established a long line of observation posts. These fully served the purpose of containing the enemy, and if Roberts's infantry had attacked at any time during the day and driven the Afghans from the hills, Dunham Massy's well-placed cavalry would have inflicted heavy loss on the fugitives; but no attack was made, and, at nightfall, Massy, recognizing that, in the dark, pursuit over a country cut up by watercourses would be impracticable, withdrew the whole of his force to the shelter of some walled enclosures near the village of Aliabad.

Roberts was as anxious to give the Cavalry an opportunity of pursuing the enemy as they to avail themselves of it, but though on receipt of Massy's heliogram he despatched Baker with the mountain guns, the repaired gatlings, the 92nd Highlanders and the 23rd Pioneers, to drive the Afghans from the hills above the city, and sent on Macpherson's vanguard as soon as it came up, to reinforce him, he failed to concentrate a sufficient force early enough in the day, at a point from which an attack could have been delivered. Baker made all possible haste, but the march over the steep Sher Darwaza Heights—the range of hills which overlook the Bala Hissar—was so arduous that the afternoon was well advanced before he could gain a position in rear of Kabul and its Citadel, and bring his guns to bear on the Afghans facing him on the northern side of the Deh-i-Mazang Gorge, a yawning chasm, sixteen hundred feet in depth<sup>1</sup>; and it was past of these men, if there had been one to plead. Possibly, other villagers met the same fate, for Hensman attributes the absence of any attack on Massy's force "to the exemplary severity we have shown in shooting all men caught in arms against us" (Hensman, p. 49).

<sup>1</sup> Before Baker could have attacked he would have had to descend 1,600 feet and then climb up the opposite side, which was nearly as high and quite as steep.—H. B. H.

five o'clock before the first of Macpherson's troops came up. They brought him the announcement that he might count on further reinforcements early on the morrow, and for these, in his ignorance of the enemy's strength and dispositions, he determined to wait.

The sun went down that evening on a scattered British force. On the Sher Darwaza Heights lay Baker with the bulk of his Brigade and the mountain guns; on one side of the Asmai Heights, Dunham Massy and a few hundred troopers; on the other side, the two squadrons he had left to guard his communications; further north, Hugh Gough with the guns of F-A Royal Horse Artillery and a squadron of cavalry, which Roberts had despatched to watch the Kohistan road, on hearing that the three mutinous regiments which had gone off to Kohistan after the destruction of the Residency, were on their way back to Kabul; and, at Ben-i-Hissar, Roberts with the remainder of the guns, a fragment of Baker's Brigade, and, for a few hours, Macpherson's main body, waiting for the moon to rise to light it on its rough way up the Sher Darwaza Heights;—an anxious outlook for a commander burdened with the consciousness that his supplies were nearly exhausted,<sup>1</sup> his communications lost, and harassed with reports of the approach of fresh foes—three regiments hurrying up from Ghazni—and the Ghilzais from Tezin and Hissarak, who had arrived too late to take part in the engagement at Charasiab, hanging about in the neighbourhood, watching events.<sup>2</sup> But with the dawn came relief from anxiety. At 1.30 a.m., a strong patrol under Captain H. Paterson had started out by moonlight to discover if any change had taken place in the enemy's dispositions. Between four and five

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the Diary of Colonel Charles Macgregor, Roberts's Chief of the Staff, dated 8th October:—"We have nearly eaten all our provisions, and if we were to be worsted, not only would the whole country be up, but we should get no supplies. I hope Roberts's luck will carry him through; but we are playing a risky game, and if a disaster takes place? what then? It is all very well as long as things go smoothly." (P. 128.)

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 119.

o'clock the patrol returned, bringing with it some prisoners, captured on the river bank, from whom Paterson had ascertained that the Afghans had abandoned their camp, guns and elephants, and dispersed ; 800 mounted men, under their leader Mahomed Jan, alone keeping together and making for Ghazni. When Macpherson arrived at daybreak to take, as senior officer, the command of the troops on the Darwaza Heights, he found no enemy to engage : and Massy's men scoured the country practically in vain, for, with the exception of a few small parties overtaken and cut up by the 5th Punjab Cavalry, the whole of the large force, which a few hours before had presented so formidable an aspect, had disappeared : some to hide in nullahs, some to seek safety among the hills, but the greater part to return to their homes, there to lay aside their weapons and resume their ordinary lives as townsfolk or villagers, till some fresh opportunity of striking a blow at their invaders should again call them to arms.

In the course of the day, Roberts shifted his camp from Ben-i-Hissar to the Siah Sang Heights, the low plateau crossed by the Cavalry the previous day. It lies between the direct road to India and the Kabul River, and commands the city of Kabul, half a mile away on the West, and the walled cantonment of Sherpur, distant a little over a mile on the North-west. Here, late at night, the whole British Force was once more assembled, except two squadrons of the 12th Bengal Lancers, who had been ordered to continue the pursuit of Mahomed Jan and his followers ; the 5th Gurkhas and four guns No. 2 Mountain Battery, left in occupation of the Sher Darwaza Heights ; and the 5th Punjab Cavalry, who had moved into Sherpur to protect the captured guns.

No casualties had attended the operations which had come to so sudden and satisfactory a close ; but both men and horses were greatly in need of rest after three days of hard work on little to eat, and some of the latter subsequently died of the fatigue and hardships they had undergone :—a loss, small in itself, but none the less of importance to

a force weak in cavalry, in a country where there was no possibility of making it good.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, supplies were abundant, for though strict orders were issued forbidding any member of the Force from entering the city, merchants were encouraged to bring their goods into camp, which was soon filled with their stalls, among these the most attractive being those laden with fruit of many kinds and exquisite quality—the one product in which the province of Kabul excels all other countries.

<sup>1</sup> “Horses and men of all the regiments out with General Massy were quite exhausted when they at last reached their quarters here. Some score of horses were lost on the road, having literally died in harness.” (Hensman, p. 48.)

## CHAPTER IX

### The Abdication of Yakub Khan

ON the 11th of October, Sir Frederick Roberts and his Chief of the Staff inspected the Bala Hissar, and visited the still smouldering ruins of the Residency. A few field and mountain guns were discovered and there were indications that the Arsenal contained large quantities of powder.

This visit was to be the precursor of another on a very different scale, and before evening it was known in camp and city that on the morrow a great Durbar would be held within the walls of the citadel, at which the British Commander, accompanied by the Amir, his Ministers and a number of Sirdars, and escorted by his entire Force, would announce to the people of Kabul the will of the British Government with regard to them and their city ; that, at the close of the ceremony, four of Yakub Khan's most powerful adherents were to be arrested, was known only to a few. Blue Books are silent as to whether it was intended that this plan should include the Amir, and the same reticence is observed in Lord Roberts's Autobiography ; but this negative evidence in favour of the view that Yakub Khan never came within its compass, is more than balanced by Sir Charles Macgregor's direct testimony to the contrary, given under conditions which exclude all doubt as to its truth and genuineness. Not years later, but at the time ; not to impugn or vindicate the credit of the person responsible for the scheme, but as an ordinary entry in a diary never intended to meet the public eye, the Chief of the Staff, fresh

from a consultation at which the arrest of the Amir had been decided on, briefly recorded the fact and signified in blunt terms his own approval of the decision, and the disapproval of the Political Secretary, Mr. Mortimer Durand. "Morty," so Macgregor wrote on the evening of the 11th of October, "is very much concerned about the Amir, and says he is being treated badly and condemned without a hearing. I think there is quite enough proof to make us suspect him, and, if we suspect him, we should quod him. . . . Wrote out programme for to-morrow, when we are to make our entry into the Bala Hissar, never to go out of it again I hope. The troops are to line the road, and a salute is to be fired and the flag hoisted ; then we are to go into the Diwan-i-Am, and the Amir and all his people are to be quoded."<sup>1</sup> The entry, so positive as to the decision arrived at, ends on a note of doubt. Durand and Hastings had got at Roberts and shaken him in his intentions, and the writer did not know what he would do. Whether the Politicals did persuade Roberts to spare Yakub Khan is uncertain, for events took a turn which resulted in the Amir's dropping altogether out of the programme arranged by Macgregor ; but, since the grave resolve to arrest him had once been taken, the question arises of how it had been reached, and by what facts and arguments Roberts justified it to himself.

Coming distrustful to his first interview with the Amir, unfavourably impressed by his guest's manner and appearance, the British Commander, whilst yielding to Yakub Khan's request to be allowed to live outside the British camp, had sought to hinder any misuse of this privilege by assigning to him a strong British escort. Unfortunately, this guard, though it could control the Amir's movements and mark who went in and out of his tent, could not hear what passed between him and his visitors, nor ascertain what instructions the mounted messengers who frequently met him, carried back to

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. pp. 130, 132.



Kabul.<sup>1</sup> Day by day, Roberts's uneasiness as to the meaning of all this coming and going—an uneasiness skilfully fostered by Wali Mahomed and other enemies of the Amir—increased and deepened, till, in the end, he came to put on it the worst possible construction, and to attribute to Yakub Khan every hindrance that stood in the way of his advance, from the unfriendliness of the inhabitants of the Logar Valley<sup>2</sup> to the armed opposition which he found awaiting him at Charasiab.<sup>3</sup> His published telegrams and letters to the Indian Government are no evidence of his real feelings; it is in *Forty-One Years in India*, that they are to be found; there, every page on which Yakub Khan's name occurs, reveals the distrust, contempt, and dislike with which the writer regarded him. One instance will suffice to show the contrast between the tone of the despatches and that of the Autobiography. It relates to an incident which occurred, or is said to have occurred, the day before the fight at Charasiab, the official version of which is given in the following extracts from two letters to the Government of India, the first dated Kabul, 20th October, the second, 4th November, 1879.<sup>4</sup>

“I think it desirable to mention here that some doubt has been thrown upon the conduct of his Highness, the Amir, in connection with the fight at Charasiab. It is said that Sirdar Nek Muhammad, Uncle of Yakub Khan, who had been left in charge at Kabul during his Highness's absence, came out and had an interview with his Highness on the 5th; that he was directed to return at once and stir up the troops and city people to oppose us, and that the action of the 6th

<sup>1</sup> “He was in constant communication with Kabul, and was frequently being met by mounted messengers.” (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 209.)

<sup>2</sup> “It was plain from these occurrences . . . that the people generally were not disposed to be friendly. From the Amir I could extract no information on this head, although he must have been fully aware of the feelings and intentions of his subjects.” (*Ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 210, 211.

<sup>4</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, pp. 154 and 166.

was fought in direct obedience to the Amir's orders. Nek Muhammad, after an attempt to treat for pardon, has now disappeared, and it is not easy to ascertain the truth of the story; but I have reason to believe that an interview took place, as stated, that Nek Muhammad thereupon called out the troops and city people for a holy war in the name of the Amir, and that he commanded in person during the action of the 6th. I shall do my best to obtain further evidence in the matter."—"I mentioned in my letter of the 20th October that some doubt had been thrown on Yakub Khan's conduct in connection with the fight at Charasiab. The suspicion has, to a certain extent, been strengthened by the production of a letter supposed to have been written by Yakub's Uncle, Nek Muhammad Khan, in which he states that he was personally ordered by the Amir to raise a holy war against us. . . . It is not, however, conclusive proof of Yakub's bad faith, for there is some doubt as to its being authentic, and it was brought to me by Sirdar Wali Muhammad, whose feelings towards Yakub are openly unfriendly. I have been unable to ascertain the name of Nek Muhammad's supposed correspondent."

In *Forty-One Years in India* the story runs thus:—"An Uncle of the Amir, Sirdar Nek Mahomed Khan, . . . came out to meet Yakub Khan at this place (Charasiab); he remained some time in earnest conversation with his nephew, and, as he was about to remount his horse, called out in so loud a tone that it was evidently meant for us all to hear, that he was 'now going to disperse the troops.'"<sup>1</sup> Here, Roberts not only asserts that the interview took place, but writes as though he had been personally cognizant of it at the time. Doubt, whether it had even happened in 1879; certainty as to its details in 1897. But this is not all. Following on this purely imaginary version of one incident, comes a prejudiced version of another. Contrasting Nek Mahomed's declaration that he was going back to Kabul to disperse the troops with what happened in that

<sup>1</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 210.

city, he writes :—" Very different, however, was the story brought to me by an escaped Native servant of Cavagnari's, who came into our camp later in the day. This man declared that preparations for fighting were steadily being carried on ; that the soldiers and townspeople were streaming into the arsenal and supplying themselves with cartridges ; that large bodies of troops were moving out in our direction ; and that, when we advanced next day, we should certainly be opposed by a formidable force. The Amir, on having this intelligence communicated to him, pretended to disbelieve it utterly, and assured me that all was at peace in the city, that Nek Muhammad would keep the troops quiet and that I should have no trouble ; but I was not taken in by his specious assurances."<sup>1</sup>

It would have been well if, before accusing the Amir of having deceived him at Charasiab as to the state of Kabul and the temper of the Afghan troops, Lord Roberts had re-read the following Memorandum, from which it is clear that the information as to the plundering of the Arsenal by the mutinous troops, and their determination to oppose the British advance at the Sang-i-Nawishta Gorge, had been furnished by the Amir himself :—

" This morning Major Hastings and Nawab Ghulam Hassan Khan, with Kazi Muhammad Aslam, under orders from Major-General Sir Frederick Roberts, V.C., K.C.B., went to see the Amir. The following is the pith of the Amir's advice and conversation :—

" (1) In my opinion the best thing is to occupy the hill commanding the Pass which leads to Kabul. The mutinous troops have lately occupied that hill, and, if they were allowed to keep it in their possession for the night, they are sure to fortify it, and it will be rather difficult to dislodge them from there to-morrow.

" (2) I have received a verbal message from Kabul to the effect that the mutinous regiments have plundered the magazine. My

<sup>1</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. pp. 210, 211.

mother and wife have left the Bala Hissar and gone to the house of Sirdar Yahya Khan ; and that the other members of my family will soon follow them. The Bala Hissar is actually out of my possession. . . .

“(3) I have been and am still the true friend of the English, and so long as I live I will remain a staunch ally of the British Government.

“(4) On account of my coming to the British camp, all people call me an infidel (Kafir), and my private servants desert me every day. No one will obey my orders, or consider me the Amir.

“Note.—The Amir appeared in a very unsettled and troubled state of mind.

“(Signed) E. G. HASTINGS, Major, Political Officer.<sup>1</sup>

“CHARASLAB, the 6th October, 1879.”

Still, when all allowance has been made for prejudice on Roberts's part, enough remains in the character and situation of the Amir to justify a prudent man in taking steps to relieve himself of what must have been an almost intolerable burden. Yakub Khan had no personal attachment to the British Government, an alliance with which had cost him so dear ; nor yet to the British Commander of whose feelings towards himself he cannot have been ignorant, and he must have been tormented by doubt as to the success of the punitive expedition. How was so small a force, daily reduced to half its strength by the poverty of its transport, to overcome the opposition which it was certain to encounter ? and, even if it did penetrate to Kabul, what likelihood was there that it would be able to maintain itself there long enough to re-establish his sovereignty on sure foundations ? Doubtless, also, his Kabul visitors did play upon his fears, upon his

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, pp. 118, 119.

The Amir could not on the morning of the 6th October, the day on which the action took place, have advised the occupation of the hill above the Sang-i-Nawishta Gorge on the ground that if left in the hands of the mutinous troops during the night they would fortify it ; he must have done so the previous day. Hastings, who was in constant communication with him, must have condensed two conversations into one.—H. B. H.

distrust of the foreigner, upon his natural sympathy with his own troops and people, on his disgust at having his name used to give a show of legality to the execution of his subjects. There is no proof that he betrayed his self-chosen protectors—information as to the numbers of the British force and as to the manner of its march could have been carried to Kabul by scores of the inhabitants of the Logar Valley, and it required no orders from him to stir up his soldiers to resist invaders whose threatened vengeance might fall upon themselves—but he must have been sorely tempted to give people and troops such signs of his sympathy as could serve to open to him an avenue of return, if the coming fight were to end in a British defeat; and, because of this temptation, he should, in his own interest, have been deprived of all opportunity of incurring suspicion. From the first, no coming and going between his camp and his capital should have been sanctioned; he should have been plainly told that, so long as Kabul was not in the undisputed possession of the punitive Force, so long he must be content to stand aside and leave the entire conduct of events to the man responsible for that Force's safety. Such treatment might have seemed harsh; it would have been infinitely kinder than the liberty accorded to him—a liberty which so closely resembled the proverbial rope given to the dog that he might hang himself therewith.

A rumour of the fate in store for him and his Ministers must have reached Yakub Khan on the morning of the 12th of October, and in an agony of humiliation at the prospect of being arrested in his own Hall of Audience, before friends and foes, he rushed to the British General's tent, refused absolutely to accompany him to the Durbar, and insisted on resigning the Amirship. There is no account, except Roberts's, of what passed at this interview, and that is vitiated by the necessity under which its author lay of representing the Amir's determination to resign his crown as entirely spontaneous;<sup>1</sup> but Yakub

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, pp. 135, 147, 148.



Khan afterwards declared that his abdication was extorted from him by ungenerous and cruel pressure, and that the British Government had no right to hold him to it, and no right to expect him to abide by it.<sup>1</sup>

The pressure complained of must have consisted in the open disgrace which he believed to be designed for him ; for though his arrest was probably intended to lead up to his deposition at some future time, his sudden abdication cannot have been desired by Roberts, whom it deprived of a convenient excuse for punishing men who had taken no part in the attack on the Residency. Retrospectively, it might still be possible to put Afghan officers and soldiers to death for having fought against their lawful sovereign at Charasiab ; but when Afghanistan ceased to have a sovereign of any kind, no such charge could be brought against those who should continue to resist their British invaders. It would have been an advantage to the British General in other ways to be able to administer the country in Yakub Khan's name till his successor could be selected, but the Amir refused to withdraw his resignation, and Roberts had to content himself by extracting from him a promise to retain the title till the Viceroy had been communicated with and his instructions received. Lord Lytton's acceptance of Yakub Khan's resignation was telegraphed on the 23rd of October, and the Ex-Amir remained in the British camp, treated with courtesy, but carefully guarded, lest he should seek to escape, till the 1st of December, when he was despatched under a strong escort to India. During the interval, a Commission appointed to inquire into all the circumstances connected with the outbreak of the 3rd of September, had brought together evidence which satisfied Roberts " that the Amir could not have been ignorant that an attack on the Residency was contemplated " ;<sup>2</sup> but when this same evidence

<sup>1</sup> Private letter to Lord Cranbrook contained in *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, pp. 398, 399.

<sup>2</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 255.



was gone into by a committee "composed of gentlemen possessing long and varied experience in judicial investigation and in dealing with the testimony of Asiatics,"<sup>1</sup> they found that the massacre was a purely accidental occurrence, unpremeditated even by the regiments which committed the crime. Where they did attach blame to Yakub Khan and his Ministers was, in not having interposed effectively to protect, or rescue, Cavagnari and his companions during the attack on the Residency; for showing, subsequently, indifference to their fate; and for having failed to fulfil their treaty obligation to protect the British Embassy at Kabul.<sup>2</sup>

This summing up of the findings of the Committee covers only a portion of the charges into which that tribunal had to inquire. General Gordon, who had had access to its proceedings, stated three others: viz. the concealment of letters from the Russian Government; the attempt to form a Triple Alliance between Russia, Afghanistan, and Kashmir; and treacherous dealings with an Afghan leader—evidently Nek Mahomed—whilst living in Roberts's camp.<sup>3</sup> It is a matter of regret that Lord Lytton forgot to say whether, on these counts, the accused was held guilty or innocent. The conclusions which the Viceroy did record, though they sufficed as reasons for excluding Yakub for ever from the throne of Kabul, yet seemed to him to err on the side of leniency;<sup>4</sup> and in a Minute left for the instruction and guidance of his successor in the Viceroyalty, he expressed the hope that the Government of India would never be induced to assent to the restoration of a prince whose hands were "deeply stained in the

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> "Personal Reminiscences of General Gordon," by Demetrius Boulger, published in the *Pall Mall Magazine* of May, 1896, p. 143.

Extract from Gordon's Memorandum on the subject:—"Stokes (legal member), Arbuthnot, and another member of Supreme Council, all protested against the deposition of Yakub—also Sir Neville Chamberlain." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>4</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 376.

innocent blood of Sir L. Cavagnari and his brave companions." In Gordon's eyes—and he had gone carefully into the evidence on which these conclusions were based—Yakub, though "weak and timid in a critical moment," was guiltless of all treacherous action or intent; and he gave the most convincing proof of the strength of his conviction of the Ex-Amir's innocence by resigning his post as private secretary to Lord Ripon rather than participate in the injustice done to him.

## CHAPTER X

### Durbar in the Bala Hissar. Entry into Kabul

LEAVING Yakub Khan in the tent to which he had been conducted after the momentous interview recorded in the last chapter, Sir Frederick Roberts, preceded by his staff and accompanied by the Heir-Apparent, Musa Jan, descended from the Siah Sang Heights at noon, on the 12th of October. British troops lined the road for nearly a mile, and as he entered the Bala Hissar by the Peshawar Gate, the British flag was hoisted, the National Anthem played, and a salute fired by the guns of the Royal Horse Artillery, according to the programme arranged by Macgregor the previous day. As soon as the procession had passed inside the fortress, the 67th foot, which had held the gateway and its approaches, closed up and followed their General to the Royal Garden, lying to the North of the Arsenal, containing a pretty wooden house, which was to be the scene of the chief event of the day. There was delay at the garden gate, for the key was missing, and fresh delay after the house had been reached and the General and his Staff had ascended to the Diwan-i-Am, a large, open, upper room, for some of the Sirdars, among them the Mustaufi, who had been warned to attend, were discovered to have absented themselves.<sup>1</sup> Messengers were despatched in search of them, and when they reluctantly appeared, the following Proclamation was read out by Roberts in English, and indifferently translated into Persian by the Kazi :—

“ In my Proclamation of the 3rd October, Shawal, dated, Zargan Shahr, I informed the people of Kabul that a British army was advanc-

<sup>1</sup> Duke's *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign*, p. 161.

ing to take possession of the city, and I warned them against offering any resistance to the entry of the troops and the authority of His Highness the Amir: that warning has been disregarded. The force under my command has now reached Kabul and occupied the Bala Hissar; but its advance has been pertinaciously opposed, and the inhabitants of the city have taken a conspicuous part in the opposition offered. They have, therefore, become rebels against the Amir, and have added to the guilt already incurred by them in abetting the murder of the British Envoy and his companions. For the treacherous and cowardly crime which has brought indelible disgrace upon the Afghan people, it would be but a just and fitting reward, for such misconduct, if the city of Kabul were now totally destroyed and its very name blotted out. But the great British Government ever desires to temper justice with mercy; and I now announce to the inhabitants of Kabul that the full retribution for their offence will not be exacted, and that the city will be spared. Nevertheless, it is necessary that they should not escape all penalty, and further that the punishment inflicted should be such as will be felt and remembered. Therefore, such portions of the city buildings as now interfere with the proper military occupation of the Bala Hissar, and the safety and comfort of the British troops to be quartered in it, will be at once levelled with the ground, and, further, a heavy fine, the amount of which will be notified hereafter, will be imposed upon the inhabitants of Kabul, to be paid according to their several capacities. I further give notice to all that, in order to provide for the restoration and maintenance of order, the city of Kabul and the surrounding country, to a distance of 10 miles, are placed under martial law. With the consent of His Highness the Amir, a Military Governor of Kabul will be appointed to administer justice and punish with a strong hand all evil-doers. The inhabitants of Kabul and neighbouring villages are hereby warned to submit to his authority. This punishment inflicted upon the whole city will not, of course, absolve from further penalties

those whose individual guilt may be hereafter proved. A full and searching inquiry into the circumstances of the late outbreak will be held; and all persons connected with, or bearing a part in it, will be dealt with according to their deserts. With the view of providing effectually for the prevention of crime and disorder and the safety of all well-disposed persons in Kabul, it is hereby notified that for the future the carrying of dangerous weapons, whether swords, knives, or firearms, within the streets, or within a distance of five miles from the city gates, is forbidden. After a week from the date of this Proclamation, any person found armed within those limits will be liable to the penalty of death. Persons having in their possession any articles whatsoever which formerly belonged to members of the British Embassy are required to bring them forthwith to the British Camp. Anyone neglecting this warning will, if found hereafter in possession of any such articles, be subjected to severest penalties. Further, all persons who may have in their possession any firearms or ammunition formerly issued to or seized by the Afghan troops, are required to produce them. For every country-made rifle whether breech or muzzle-loading, the sum of Rupees 3 will be given on delivery, and for every rifle of European manufacture, Rupees 5. Anyone found hereafter in possession of any such weapons will be severely punished. Finally, I notify that I will give a reward of Rupees 50 for the surrender of any person, whether soldier or civilian, concerned in the attack on the British Embassy, or such information as may lead directly to his capture. A similar sum will be given in the case of any person who may have fought against the British troops since the 3rd September, Shawal, last, and therefore become a rebel against His Highness the Amir. If any such person so surrendered or captured be a captain or subaltern officer of the Afghan Army, the reward will be increased to Rupees 75, and if a field officer to Rupees 120."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, pp. 135, 136.

After the reading of this proclamation the Afghan portion of the audience was dismissed with the exception of the Mustaufi, Habi-bulla Khan, the Wizier, Shah Mahomed Khan, the Governor of Kabul, Yahiya Khan, and Yahiya's brother-in-law, Zakariah Khan, who, after being briefly informed by Roberts that they were prisoners, into whose conduct in connection with the massacre of the Embassy and the resistance offered to the British advance at Charasiab, strict inquiry would be made, were placed in separate rooms and left in charge of Colonel Knowles, whose regiment, the 67th Foot, was to occupy the garden, whilst the 5th Gurkhas were to be quartered on the southern side of the Arsenal.<sup>1</sup>

The next day Sir F. Roberts made a formal entry into Kabul, riding through the principal streets and squares, preceded by the Cavalry Brigade and followed by five Battalions of Infantry, the people "neither respectful nor disrespectful"<sup>2</sup> looking on with Oriental indifference. Probably the thought that these disturbers of their peace would trouble them only for a season, passing away as their predecessors of 1839 had passed, was in the minds of most of the men who left their shops and stalls, or laid aside their tools to watch the foreigners go by. Strong as was the force that escorted the British General and his Staff that day, it was just as well that the people were in this apathetic mood, for not even Kandahar lends itself better to street fighting than Kabul, with its few open spaces separated from each other by a tangle of dark, filthy, narrow streets and alleys; the whole divided into quarters, and the quarters into sections; each with its gateway, which can quickly be built up, thus transforming the city into a nest of fortresses. On nearer acquaintance, Kabul was found to contain no fine buildings of any kind—solid masonry and lofty minarets are out of place where earthquakes are of frequent occurrence—but its Bazaars were well stocked with goods of home manufacture, ornaments in silver, utensils of iron and brass, sheepskin

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



(pushteen) gloves, boots, and coats, often beautifully embroidered, saddles and whips and other articles in leather, weapons of all kinds, from the two-edged Afghan knife to the rifle copied from British models. There was no lack, too, of carpets, silken stuffs, pottery, and other foreign products, and many rare curios were discovered in out-of-the-way nooks and corners of the city, the price of which rose quickly as the demand for them increased. The butchers' shops were well supplied with mutton ; one square was devoted entirely to vegetables, game, and poultry ; the fruit stalls were laden in autumn with apples, pomegranates, and, above all, grapes of the finest quality, and in the summer with mulberries, cherries, peaches, apricots, and plums.<sup>1</sup> These things, however, were luxuries, pleasant for those who could afford to buy them, but of no account when the question of maintaining a foreign garrison had to be considered ; and of wheat and other grains, the real necessities of life, there was barely enough to keep the inhabitants alive throughout the winter : yet Roberts could not break up his force and send them tax-collecting into other provinces, as is the custom of the Amir, till the season of scarcity should pass. The poverty of its immediate surroundings and its consequent dependence for the bulk of its supplies on more fertile districts, from which in winter it is cut off by snow, hinder the growth and development of Kabul ; but its situation at the point where the roads from India, Central Asia, and Southern Afghanistan meet, gives it a certain commercial value as a market and place of exchange ; whilst its remoteness from the borders of its enemies, and the difficulties that those enemies must experience in keeping their hold on it, supposing it to have fallen into their hands, mark it out as the best possible capital for Afghanistan in the present military stage of the world's development.

To preserve order and execute justice within the city, deprived of its Native ruler by the arrest of Yahiya Khan, Major-General James Hills, V.C., was appointed as its Governor ; and at the same time two

<sup>1</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, pp. 191-195.

courts were constituted, the one, political, to collect evidence against men accused or suspected of being offenders under the Proclamation, the other, military, to judge and sentence those whom the Court of Inquiry should pass on to it. Each consisted of three members ; the first of Colonel Macgregor, Surgeon-Major Bellew, and Mahomed Hyat Khan, C.S.I., an excellent Persian and Pushtu scholar ; the second of Brigadier-General Massy, Major M. P. Moriarty, Bombay Staff Corps, and Captain C. W. N. Guinness, 72nd Highlanders.

Hardly had the Political Commission entered on its work when a terrible catastrophe interrupted its labours. At 1.30 p.m. on the 16th October, the powder in the storehouses on the northern side of the Arsenal, fired by what accident was never discovered, suddenly exploded, blowing the buildings to pieces and burying under their ruins Captain Shafto, R.A., and six Kalassies who were assisting him in reducing their miscellaneous contents to order ;<sup>1</sup> also a Subadar-Major, five pay-sergeants, and a corporal who, in the square occupied by the 5th Gurkhas, were counting out the regimental chest, and the occupants of the guard-room—a corporal and five sepoy. The officers of the regiment, who were just sitting down to lunch, escaped uninjured, and a Gurkha who had been doing sentry duty on the roof of the destroyed houses, and who had been carried up into the air to fall stunned and bruised among the wreckage, survived to tell the tale.<sup>2</sup> In the Royal Gardens only one man of the 67th was killed, the sentry on the roof of the house in which the Afghan prisoners were detained. As the smoke and dust cleared away, it was seen that a detached building known to contain 400 tons of gunpowder was intact ; and as the fire, which constant slight explosions showed to be spreading, might reach it at any moment, Macgregor, who had closed his Court and hurried to the Bala Hissar, ordered every human being within its walls to quit it at once, and peremptorily refused to allow any search

<sup>1</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 183.

to be made for the missing.<sup>1</sup> The 67th, taking their prisoners with them, withdrew by the Peshawar Gate; the Gurkhas, partly by the same gate, partly through a hole cut in the outer wall. About half a mile from the citadel both regiments halted, waiting and watching for a second explosion, which came at 4 p.m., just when they had begun to hope that all danger was over. Its force was so great that masses of masonry were hurled hundreds of yards through the air and showers of stones fell among the Gurkhas; and, yet, though the whole of the eastern wall with its huge turrets had been destroyed, next day brought the discovery that it was some smaller storehouses, and not the big magazine, that had exploded. Had the first explosion occurred in the Main magazine, the 67th Foot and the Gurkhas must have been annihilated; the Afghan Ministers would have shared their fate, and part of the town have been wrecked. As it was, the town and the prisoners escaped injury, the 67th Foot had one man killed and a few slightly injured, the Gurkhas fourteen killed and seven or eight wounded, the 5th Punjab Cavalry lost two troopers who were acting as orderlies to Captain Shafto, and a few drivers and some camels and mules perished in the Arsenal square.

By the two explosions an immense quantity of war material was destroyed, and when the fire had burnt itself out, the loose powder contained in the buildings which had survived the catastrophe was flooded with water and thrown, little by little, into the moat, after which the military guards were withdrawn and the Bala Hissar handed over to the custody of sixty Native Chowkidars, under the orders of the headman of the Arab community in Kabul.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Some men—Surgeon-Major J. Bourke amongst them—volunteered to go in and see if they could save any one in the Bala Hissar, but I did not see the good, so vetoed any such idea." (*Life of Sir C. Macgregor*, pp. 130–137.)

<sup>2</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, pp. 189, 190.

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. The measures to secure the safety of his troops, announced by Roberts in the Proclamation, were no more stringent than was absolutely necessary. Buildings commanding a military position must often be destroyed, and, in a country where all men possess arms, nothing less than a general order against the carrying of them within five miles of the British camp would have protected soldiers and camp-followers against assassination. The fixing of a time-limit within which the penalties attached to the violation of this order should not be enforced, and the offering of payment for all rifles surrendered, were provisions conceived in a fair and liberal spirit; and there was nothing unusual, or cruelly harsh, in the imposition of a fine on a city in which an outrage on a foreign Embassy had been committed. Strong exception, however, must be taken to the Proclamation's assertion of a conqueror's right to raze a city to the ground as a punishment for that, or any other, offence. Every town contains at least a woman and three children to one man, and, of the latter, only a small proportion can ever be shown to have taken part in the commission of a crime. At Kabul, only a small number of the male citizens, and they of the lowest class, had been parties to the attack on the Residency;—the troops were the real culprits, and they were out of reach of retribution. That the claim advanced by Roberts was never intended to be acted upon, makes no difference to its morality—the morality of an Alva or a Tilly, not that of a Wellington or a Clyde; and it sinned against British dignity as well as against Christian and military ethics; for those bidden to see mercy in its withdrawal, knew perfectly well that the destruction of Kabul would condemn its destroyers to starvation. But if the preamble of the Proclamation reflects discredit on its author, much more is this the case with its concluding clauses. Cupidity and treachery are the traits of Afghan character most loudly denounced by Europeans, traits

on which Roberts himself was constantly harping, and he dishonoured himself in appealing to them for his own supposed advantage. To offer rewards for the surrender of persons implicated in the murder of Cavagnari was bad in principle, and little likely to serve the cause of truth and justice in a community torn by internal factions, each ever ready to bring false accusations against all the rest ; but to put a price on the heads of men who, in fighting against an invading force, had been guilty of no crime either in their own eyes or in the eyes of their prospective betrayers, was to strike at the best part of Afghan character—its love of independence and love of country—and at the same time to deal a blow to that sense of justice latent in the hearts of most Englishmen, which every wise Commander would seek to cherish in his subordinates ; because on it alone can any permanent or fruitful relation be established between them and the races with whom war may bring them into contact.<sup>1</sup>

OBSERVATION II. The quartering of troops close up to an Arsenal known to contain vast quantities of war material scattered about and mixed up in disorderly and dangerous fashion, is a remarkable instance of lack of foresight and care. Because of the Arsenal, the Bala Hissar had to be under complete British control, but this object could have been attained by temporarily expelling its inhabitants, placing strong guards at its gates, and leaving a force on the hills by which the citadel is commanded. Responsibility for the lives lost in the explosion rests, primarily, with the General and his Staff, who were the first to visit the Bala Hissar and to note the state of the Arsenal ; secondarily, with the Commanding Officers of the 67th and the 5th Gurkhas, whose duty it was to call the attention of their superiors to the unnecessary risk to which their men were being

<sup>1</sup> Macgregor disapproved of treating men who had “merely fought against us” as criminals, and recorded in his diary his determination not “to sentence such men to death.” (*Life of Sir C. Macgregor*, p. 135.)



exposed. They may have done so and not been listened to. They certainly were not blind to the danger, for Duke in his *Recollections* mentions that the Gurkha officers "often told Shafto how pleased they (we) should be if he could remove the deadly stuff that lay between them (us) and the 67th below."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, p. 178.



## CHAPTER XI

### Defence of the Shutargardan

ON the day following the explosion in the Bala Hissar, Sir Frederick Roberts despatched Brigadier-General Hugh Gough with four guns, No. 1 Mountain Battery, the 5th Punjab Cavalry, and the 5th Punjab Infantry, all corps belonging to the well-equipped Punjab Frontier Force, to the relief of Colonel Money, who was known to be holding his own with difficulty against a large gathering of tribesmen. Gough took with him a train of transport animals for the use of the beleaguered garrison, which, with the exception of the 21st Punjab Infantry, whose services were urgently needed in the Kuram, was to return with him to Kabul; and it was hoped that the remaining two squadrons of the 9th Lancers, drafts for various regiments, and a commissariat and ammunition convoy would arrive from India in time to join the relieving column.

On the 19th of October, Gough occupied the Shinkai Kotal, halfway between Kushi and the Shutargardan, and heliographed the news of his approach to Colonel Money. The attack on that officer's entrenched camp mentioned in a previous chapter, had been a critical business. A large body of tribesmen had, for a time, commanded the British position and broken its telegraphic communication with the Kuram. Major C. J. Griffiths, who went out with 250 Sikhs to dislodge the enemy, was wounded early in the engagement, but his men, led by Captain W. B. Aislabie, drove the tribesmen from the heights with the loss of their main standard, captured by Jemadar Gunesa

Sing, and of two or three hundred killed and wounded, whilst, including Griffiths and Signalling-Sergeant Browne, the victors had only eight men wounded.

For some days after this salutary lesson the little garrison was left in peace, but rumours were rife that the tribes were gathering again, and, on the 14th of October, Money sent Major F. W. Collis with two mountain guns, 50 Sikhs, and two companies of the 21st Punjab Infantry, to withdraw the outpost on the Surkai Kotal. Collis had not long left camp when news was brought in that the outpost was already hotly engaged with some five or six hundred Ghilzais; and 200 Sikhs and 100 men of the 21st, under Griffiths, who refused to remain on the sick list, were instantly hurried off to strengthen the relieving column. A little later it was discovered that a large body of tribesmen were advancing upon the hill from which they had been driven on the 2nd, and Money despatched two guns under Lieutenant J. C. Shirres, and two companies of the 21st under Captain H. H. Swetenham, so promptly that they crowned the ridge just in time to forestall the Ghilzais, who were swarming up its reverse slope. Foiled, but not beaten, the tribesmen quickly rallied and boldly renewed the attack, only to be again repulsed. Once more they reformed, but at sight of Money with two companies of Sikhs hastening to Swetenham's assistance, they suddenly changed their tactics, and, abandoning the hill to its defenders, poured down its sides with the intention of overwhelming the troops on their way to relieve the Surkai outpost.

Collis, on arriving at the foot of the Kotal, had seized a hill commanding the pass and sent forward two parties, each of fifty men, the one under Captain W. H. Gowan, the other under Lieutenant E. J. N. Fasken, to attack the enemy. The issue was still undecided when the second relief force overtook the first, and Griffiths, on assuming the command of both, found himself between hammer and anvil—in his front, seven hundred tribesmen in a strong position, and in his rear, the three thousand repulsed by Money. Quick to see the

best course of action, he ordered fifty men to turn the hill which Gowan and Fasken were trying to storm, and as soon as he saw the success of this movement, leaving Collis to collect his scattered troops, he faced about and ordered Lieutenant W. H. Young, who with a company of the 21st had been holding the enemy in check, to take the offensive. Young, supported by a company of Sikhs under Lieutenant W. Cook, attacked vigorously, capturing two standards, but his men, getting into broken, raviny ground, came to a standstill close to some breast-works to which the enemy had retreated. Seeing that their pursuers were in difficulties, the Ghilzais charged out, but, luckily at that moment, the guns came into action in rear of the infantry, with such accuracy and effect, that, for the second time, they had to seek the shelter of their stockades.<sup>1</sup> Here they were for the moment secure, for so small was the British force that merely to hold the ground it had won every staff-officer and non-combatant on his way to Kabul, had to take his place in the fighting line.<sup>2</sup> One of the former, Captain Waterfield, was severely wounded and carried out of danger by Cook, who was subsequently brought to notice for his gallant conduct throughout the whole engagement. Meanwhile Collis had collected his men and now dashed forward at their head, and the Ghilzais, no less eager to come to close quarters, burst from their defences under cover of a shower of stones, and rushed boldly down upon their new assailants. But short swords had no chance against rifle and bayonet, and this time the British were able to follow up their foes, capture their sangars, and, reinforced by a detachment of Sikhs, sent by Money in the very

<sup>1</sup> "The shells had to pass within six feet of the 21st Company and burst eighty yards in front; dangerous, of course, but necessary, and three shells fired burst exactly on the same spot, in the very place wanted." (Letter of an officer who took part in the action.)

<sup>2</sup> These were: Captain A. H. Turner, Political Officer; Captain D. M. D. Waterfield, R.A.; Captain W. G. Nicholson, R.E.; Lieutenant R. B. W. Fisher, 10th Hussars; Lieutenant J. Sherston, A.D.C.; and Mr. Josephs, Superintendent of Telegraphs.—H. B. H.

nick of time,<sup>1</sup> to pursue them for some distance, the guns doing considerable execution on the retiring masses. The bodies of forty Ghilzais were counted on the hill-side and there must have been many wounded, whilst the British had two Native soldiers killed, Private Macready, 72nd Highlanders, mortally wounded, and Waterfield and eight Native soldiers wounded.

But though Money and his subordinates had been victorious in the actual fighting, the outpost on the Surkai Kotal was still unrelieved; so that evening, after sundown, two hundred rifles under Collis, with a number of baggage mules, moved quietly out of camp to return at 2 o'clock the next morning with the ninety men who, for so many hours, had been in extreme peril.<sup>2</sup>

That day—the 15th of October—the enemy, strongly reinforced, reoccupied the hills overlooking the British position, and all Money could do was to send out the 21st Punjab Infantry to watch their movements. Many of the new-comers brought with them their Korans and their women, and so great was the confidence inspired in one and all by the knowledge of their enormous numerical superiority, that, in the evening, five headmen came into the camp to call upon its commander to surrender, offering, on payment of two lakhs of rupees—about £20,000—to provide him with carriage, and allow him and his troops to retire unmolested either on Kabul or the Kuram. Whether they would have kept faith is doubtful, but their sincerity was not put to the test. Money firmly refused to treat, and the delegates departed, fully convinced that the British camp with all it contained would soon be in their hands. Allal-ud-din Khan, who had been with Money—it was he who received the subsidy for keeping the Shutargardan open—followed them back to the hills to try to mediate

<sup>1</sup> This detachment was commanded by Jemadar Sher Mahomed, the Native officer who had distinguished himself in the Hazara Darakht Defile.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> "A very anxious withdrawal it was," wrote the officer who took part in the defence, "and we were all delighted to see them back again at 2 a.m. safe and sound."

between his paymasters and his people, but the Ghilzais refused to listen to him, and the next day he himself was struck by the fragment of a British shell, which shattered his left arm above the elbow.

From morning to night of the 16th, the British guns kept up an incessant fire at long range upon the tribesmen, as they worked at the sangars which they were busy constructing. In the night an attack, easily repulsed, was made on the camp, and shelter trenches thrown up dangerously near to it. From these and from their nearest line of breastworks, they were driven at daybreak by the accurate fire of the mountain guns; nevertheless, Money deemed it necessary to withdraw his outlying pickets, strengthen his guards, and order Captain Nicholson to see to the improvement of the defences and the laying of wire entanglements at their weakest points. On the 18th, the tribesmen—now said to number 17,000 men—pushed up to within three hundred yards of the camp and cut off its grass and water supply, which, with his gun and regimental ammunition running short, Money dared not attempt to recover.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, this embargo on his activity was removed next day by Gough's heliogram; with help close at hand there was no further need for him to husband his scanty resources, so, promptly resuming the offensive, he recovered the spring on the Kushi road, "got his guns into action, and shelled the enemy with shell and shrapnell right heartily."

It had taken the tribesmen days to collect; it took them only a few hours to scatter. The moment they got wind of Gough's approach the great gathering began to melt away, and by dusk the hills where they had swarmed were empty and silent, and the worried defenders of the Shutargardan camp slept that night in peace. Their loss during the five days that they had been practically shut in, was trifling—only eight men wounded and three horses killed—but the anxiety had been great, for the tribesmen might have rushed the camp

<sup>1</sup> "The garrison had only regimental ammunition with them, and this had been greatly reduced by the action of the 14th." (Hensman, p. 98.)

## DEFENCE OF THE SHUTARGARDAN III

and, by sheer weight of numbers, overwhelmed its tiny garrison ; and the heartiness of the welcome which greeted Gough next morning, when, in a blinding snowstorm, he and his troops marched into Money's camp, was in proportion to men's sense of the peril from which his opportune arrival had rescued them. The relieving force spent some days on the Shutargardan waiting for the arrival of the convoy and troops that were coming up from India. During those days, snowstorm succeeded snowstorm, and provisions were so short that the men "were on half rations, and there was no forage for the animals beyond the wormwood scrub from the sides of the mountain."<sup>1</sup> On the 26th the convoy crossed the Shutargardan ; on the 27th arrived 450 furlough men, and, last of all, two squadrons of the 9th Lancers, the sight of whose baggage, which included their full-dress uniforms and machinery for the manufacture of soda-water, rather staggered Gough.<sup>2</sup>

On the 29th of October, the 21st Punjab Infantry started for the Kuram and the rest of the troops for Kabul, in a snowstorm so heavy that it soon obliterated all trace of the camp which had been the scene of so gallant a defence. The column marched back unopposed, and, on the 4th of November, Gough and Money and their respective troops entered the Sherpur Cantonment, where Roberts met them with warm congratulations. By the abandonment of the Shutargardan the British force was left cut off from India, for the troops advancing from Peshawar had not yet opened up the Khyber road.

### OBSERVATION

Much was risked<sup>3</sup> and nothing gained by retaining the position

<sup>1</sup> "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough. *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> One of the Commanding Officers on the Shutargardan during the investment writes :—"If ever a General did a risky thing it was the way he hurried on to Kabul and left the 21st and Sikhs on the Shutargardan!! and we had a very narrow escape, to my mind."



on the Shutargardan. In the end Hugh Gough had to go back to reopen the road over that mountain for the passage of the convoys and reinforcements coming up from the Kuram, and to rescue Money from the formidable gathering of tribesmen that had closed round his camp. Having embarked on a difficult enterprise with a dangerously weak force, Roberts could not afford to spare a single man, nor, by division of his troops, to run the risk of defeat in detail. Had he been unsuccessful at Charasiab, Money must either have capitulated to the Ghilzais or been annihilated by them ; and had Gough arrived too late to relieve Money and bring him and the other reinforcements safely back to Kabul, Roberts could not have coped with the formidable rising which was to take place in December ; and he, too, would have had to choose between capitulation and annihilation. The abandonment of the Shutargardan would have made the risks that were being run glaringly clear, and caused great anxiety to the Indian Government and British public ; but these were small evils when weighed against the success of the Expedition, which Roberts would have best secured by keeping his force intact.

## CHAPTER XII

### Disturbances in the Kuram. Zaimukht Expedition

It was well that Roberts was able to detach Gough to Money's assistance, for no help could have reached him from the Kuram. The state of that province, unsatisfactory during the summer months, grew worse as the days shortened ; and, on the 13th of October, the Political Officer, Mr. James Christie, warned General Gordon that the Mangals and Jagis were assembling, and that either Ali Khel or the Peiwar Mountain would probably be attacked. The warning came not a moment too soon, for, in the succeeding night, the tribesmen occupied the ravines on either side of the Ali Khel entrenched camp, and at dawn next day, a large body of them got quite close to its right face, held by the 29th Punjab Infantry, whilst another party engaged the pickets of the 8th King's. Successful sallies were made by Major C. E. D. Branson, Lieutenants H. P. Picot and R. W. MacLeod ; and Brigade-Major Captain H. G. Grant, with a handful of cavalry, completed the enemy's defeat in one direction, whilst Colonel P. H. F. Harris with detachments of the 5th Gurkhas and 11th Bengal Infantry cleared them out of the gullies on the left of the British entrenchments. Crossing the Rokian River, the tribesmen took up a second position on a wooded ridge ; but the guns of C-4 Royal Artillery soon rendered it untenable, and they fled, leaving many dead on the field and a few prisoners in the hands of their pursuers.

But in hill warfare a defeat is never final : dispersed at one point,

the active mountaineers quickly gather together to threaten others; and at the very time when Gordon, hearing that the water supply of the Shutargardan camp had been cut off, was eager to send the reinforcements without which Money could not possibly have retreated through the Hazara Darakht Defile, his hands were tied by the news that three thousand tribesmen were approaching Balesh Khel, an important post commanding the principal road into Zaimukht territory. The relief of the Shutargardan force and the return of the 21st Punjab Infantry to the Kuram somewhat lessened his anxieties; but they were still heavy, and it was with great satisfaction that he received from the Indian Government the permission to shorten his line of communications by withdrawing from Ali Khel and the whole of the Hariab Valley, and making the Peiwar Mountain camp his most advanced post. But though, in this matter, the advice of the man upon the spot was taken, Gordon paid the penalty of giving it in his recall to Simla, where he resumed his post as Deputy Adjutant-General, Brigadier-General John Watson, V.C., succeeding him in the Kuram command.

One of the evil effects of the occupation of the Kuram had been the cessation of the good relations which, ever since the Punjab had been annexed to British India, had existed between the frontier authorities and the Zaimukhts. No tribe had given less trouble; only once, in 1855, had it shown signs of hostility;<sup>1</sup> no punitive expedition had ever entered its territory. But neither its good will towards its friendly neighbour, nor its respect for that neighbour's power, was proof against the temptations put in its way by ill-guarded baggage trains and commissariat convoys, daily to be seen skirting

<sup>1</sup> "In the early years of the annexation (of the Punjab) the Zaimukhts gave little trouble, but in 1855 they assumed a hostile attitude, and among other acts of hostility they took part in the affair near Darsamand on 30th of April. After the expedition to the Miranzai Valley in 1856, however, their behaviour became good." (*Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes*, pp. 416, 417.)

its borders ; and when, by the substitution of the road up the valley, on the left bank of the Kuram River, for that on the right bank, opportunities of plunder were multiplied, the inclination to avail itself of them grew apace, and violations of neutrality assumed a more and more barbarous character. Many a straggler was cut off by Zaimukht bands, and Surgeon Smyth's death lay at their door ; yet beyond imposing fines, which were never paid, no steps were taken to punish their evil deeds or put an end to their depredations, till a crowning outrage overcame the unwillingness of the Indian Government to increase the area over which it was openly engaged in hostilities with the tribes.

On the 29th of September, Lieutenant F. G. Kinloch, riding between Chapri and Mundari, fell into a Zaimukht ambush, and, on falling wounded from his horse, was literally hacked to pieces as he lay helpless on the ground.<sup>1</sup> To have abstained from exacting retribution for so dastardly a crime, would have been a confession of weakness such as no Government, claiming to be strong, could afford to make ; so Brigadier-General Tytler was ordered to organize a punitive expedition. Simultaneously, a proclamation was issued, setting forth the reasons for the expedition—the many misdeeds of which the Zaimukhts had been guilty—and the objects it had in view, namely, the safeguarding of the British communications and the constructing of a road between Torawari in Zaimukht, and Balesh Khel in British territory, and warning the neighbours of the offending tribe against rendering it any assistance.

The expedition was late in starting owing to the prior claims of the Kabul Force on the resources of the district, but the interval was profitably employed. Towards the end of October, Lieutenant-Colonel R. G. Rogers, with a flying column, consisting of the 85th Foot, 20th Punjab Infantry, and two mountain guns, dispersed the three thousand tribesmen, whose assembling near Balesh Khel had

<sup>1</sup> *Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes*, p. 418.

stood in the way of Gordon's sending help to Money. On the 21st of November, Major T. R. Davidson, with a squadron of the 18th Bengal Cavalry, made a dash into the enemy's country and captured twelve men, who had taken part in a very serious and sanguinary raid into British territory; and about the same time Ressaldar Nadar Ali Khan, with only thirty-six troopers of the 18th Bengal Cavalry, attacked a thousand Zaimukhts who were threatening the British post at Chapri, and drove them off with the loss of thirteen killed and many wounded, his own casualties being only three men wounded.

On the 28th of November, Tytler shifted his headquarters to Balesh Khel, and on the 30th made a reconnaissance in person into Zaimukht territory. On the 1st of December, two strong reconnoitring parties penetrated into the country in a northerly direction; on the 3rd, Colonel Rogers explored the Tortung Defile, and, the same day, Major C. R. Pennington examined the old Kafil route. Each of these parties was accompanied by one or other of the two Political Officers attached to the Force—Major T. J. C. Plowden and Captain A. Conolly—and several of them by Mr. G. B. Scott of the Survey Department, who took ample advantage of the opportunities thus afforded him of correcting and adding to the existing surveys. The result of all these reconnaissances had gone to prove that the task that lay before Tytler's Force might prove a very difficult one if the Zaimukhts, who were known to be able to put three thousand five hundred fighting men into the field, were to offer a strenuous and well-considered resistance to its movements; for though the triangular piece of country inhabited by them is not large—it has an area of from three to four hundred square miles—its fertile valleys are separated from the outer world and from each other by lofty, rugged chains of mountains, which an invader must scale, or make his approach through narrow and dangerous defiles. Fortunately, there were reasons for hoping that the opposition to be met with would be slight; the exploring parties had not been interfered with, and many villagers

had shown their desire to conciliate their invaders by bringing in offerings of honey and eggs ; also, there could be no doubt that the whole people were badly armed, their best weapons being old matchlocks, swords, and knives. Tytler, however, was a man to make sure of success, not to count upon it, and it was with a force strong enough to beat down all opposition,<sup>1</sup>

## 6 Mountain Guns,

259 Sabres . . . . .	Bengal Cavalry,
753 Rifles . . . . .	European Infantry,
1,820 Rifles . . . . .	Native Infantry,

and with an ample supply of provisions—eleven days' supply for current use, ten days in reserve at Torawari—that, on the 8th of December, he at last crossed the frontier. His objective point was Zawo, the most northerly and distant of all the Zaimukht valleys, and one so difficult of approach that it was thought to be inaccessible ; and the road selected by him was the old Kafila route, reconnoitred by Pennington.

For five marches the advance was uneventful, except that a halt was made at Manatu in order that three columns might scour the Watazai Valley, whose people had been implicated in many of the raids for which retribution was now to be exacted. Four villages

## 1 COMPOSITION OF FORCE.

1-8 Royal Artillery, 4 Screw Mountain Guns .	Major J. Haughton.
No. 1 Mountain Battery, 2 Guns . . . .	Lieutenant H. N. Jervois.
Detachment 2-8th King's . . . . .	} Captain D. A. Grant.
„ 85th Regiment . . . . .	
„ 1st Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	} Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Low.
„ 13th Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	
„ 18th Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	
8th Company Bengal Sappers and Miners .	Lieutenant H. P. Leach.
13th Bengal Infantry . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel W. Playfair.
4th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel H. P. Close.
20th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	Colonel R. G. Rogers.
29th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	Colonel J. J. H. Gordon.



were burned, but their inhabitants had fled, carrying off with them all their possessions. On the 12th of December, Tytler reached Chinarak, only eight miles short of Zawo, where the roads from Balesh Khel, Thal, and Torawari meet, and the next day, leaving a large part of his troops, under Colonel Rogers, to protect this important point, he started out to force the Zawo Defile. His diminished force he had organized into three columns: the left column, consisting of the 4th Punjab Infantry commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Close, was to crown the heights on the west; the right column, composed of two mountain guns, four companies 85th Foot, and four companies 29th Punjab Infantry under Colonel Gordon, those on the east of the defile; whilst the main body, comprising

2 Screw Mountain Guns	.	.	.	1-8 Royal Artillery,
50 Sabres	.	.	.	13th Bengal Cavalry,
100 Rifles	.	.	.	13th Bengal Infantry,
200 Rifles	.	.	.	20th Punjab Infantry,
Half-company	.	.	.	8th Bengal Sappers and Miners,

under his personal leadership, was to make its way up the defile itself. Two miles north of Chinarak, Tytler took up a position on a plateau overlooking the village of Ragha and the defile, and from this point of observation he brought the screw guns to bear on a crowd of Zaimukhts massed along a ridge which covers the Zawo Valley. As soon as he saw that their fire had shaken the enemy, he dropped back into the ravine, and, still protected by the flanking columns, pursued his difficult course up the boulder-strewn bed of the stream which flows through it. The Sappers and Miners did all in their power to smooth a way for the mountain guns, but the difficulties to be overcome were so many and so great that the day was far spent before the force reached Bagh, barely two miles beyond Ragha, and nearly four from its starting-point at Chinarak.<sup>1</sup> A cursory examination of the road

<sup>1</sup> Tytler's Despatch, dated 20th December, 1879.

in front showed it was even worse than the road behind, and, partly on this account, partly because he had had to send off all his water-carriers to Gordon, whose troops were suffering severely from thirst, Tytler resolved to bivouack for the night.

Those troops, after driving the enemy from the slopes of the hills east of Ragha, had found themselves confronted by a large body of tribesmen posted on a rocky ridge, from which the 85th Foot vainly tried to dislodge them. Direct attacks having failed, a flanking force consisting of two companies of the 29th Punjab Infantry under Lieutenant R. W. MacLeod, supported by a similar detachment under Major C. E. D. Branson, captured a hill from which an enfilading fire could be brought to bear upon the enemy's line. Instead of taking to flight the Zaimukhts flung themselves boldly on the troops, and there was some hard hand-to-hand fighting in which a Native Officer, Jemadar Fazl Ahmud, greatly distinguished himself. In the end discipline and good weapons prevailed as usual over undisciplined numbers, and Gordon's men slept that night in the position they had won.<sup>1</sup>

Next morning, leaving his Cavalry, of which he could make no use, behind him, Tytler resumed his march and soon came in sight of large bodies of Zaimukhts occupying both sides of the ravine. The screw guns were quickly brought to bear upon the closely packed masses, and the shells bursting among them soon forced them to abandon their position. Some retreated up the ravine, others scaled its walls, only to be met above by the flanking columns and to come under the fire of Gordon's mountain guns. Unable to stand against foes so much better armed than themselves, the Zaimukhts scattered in all directions, and with his flanks fully secured, Tytler left the bed of the stream and moved up a precipitous path along which the men were obliged to advance in single file. On their upward way the troops

<sup>1</sup> *Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes*, p. 422.

came under a heavy fire by which Lieutenant T. J. O'D. Renny, Adjutant of the 4th Punjab Infantry, and one of his men were mortally, and a non-commissioned officer of the same regiment, dangerously wounded.<sup>1</sup> From the summit of this precipitous pass the troops looked down upon Zawo, a horseshoe-shaped valley, shut in by lofty mountains and dotted over with villages. Tytler instantly sent down several detachments, protected by a covering party of the 4th Punjab Infantry, and in a very short time every house in Zawo was in flames and the punitive expedition on its way back to Bagh. On the 9th, a small force, under Lieutenant-Colonel Low, had penetrated into another Zaimukht valley, destroyed three villages and retired without loss. On the 15th of December, the whole of the punitive force was once again concentrated at Chinarak. On the 16th, it moved easterly to Nawakzi (nine miles); the following day to Sparkhwait (seven miles), a strongly fortified village on the edge of the country of the Urakzais, who, in defiance of the Proclamation, had mustered their fighting men and come to the help of the Zaimukhts. Shortage of supplies kept Tytler from marching straight into their territory, and whilst waiting for the return of the carriage he had despatched to his depôt at Torawari, he received orders from General Watson to bring his operations to a conclusion, as his troops were needed to make a demonstration towards the Shutargardan, with a view to reducing the pressure on Roberts who was reported to be surrounded at Kabul.<sup>2</sup> The order was peremptory, yet Tytler felt that he could not obey it without reserve. On the hills in front of his camp a large number of Urakzais had assembled who would undoubtedly seriously harass his retirement, should he enter on it without first dispersing them or receiving their submission; and the moral results of his expedition would be lost, should men come to think that it had so exhausted his resources as to leave him with no power to embark on a second.

<sup>1</sup> Tytler's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> *Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes*, p. 424.

Influenced by these considerations, he replied to Watson's summons by despatching a squadron of the 13th Bengal Lancers and the 13th Bengal Infantry, *via* Torawari to Thal, and kept his ground at Sparkhwait till the Urakzais, ignorant of what was happening at Kabul, and cowed by his firm attitude, gave hostages for the payment of a fine of Rs. 8,000 ; and the Zaimukhts, another of whose villages he had destroyed, agreed to pay all the fines owing by them, now amounting to Rs. 26,000, surrendered five hundred matchlocks and five hundred swords, and placed forty-eight hostages in his hands. These guarantees of better conduct in the future once obtained, he struck his camp and made a forced march to Chinarak and thence to Thal, where he arrived on the 23rd of December.

The British loss in the Zaimukht campaign was very small—only one private of the 4th Punjab Infantry killed in addition to Lieutenant Renny, and the non-commissioned officer of the 4th Punjab Infantry, and a private of the 29th Punjab Infantry wounded on the 14th of December ; but the name of the distinguished leader of the expedition must be added to this list. Of a constitution never robust and early enfeebled by wounds received in the Mutiny, Tytler's health had been severely tried by the hardships and anxieties of the Khyber campaign ; and the Zaimukht expedition so sapped his remaining strength that he could make no fight against disease, and when attacked by pneumonia, sank rapidly, dying at Thal on the 14th of February, 1880. Just and considerate, firm and kind, no officer in the Indian Army was more trusted and beloved than he ; and Surgeon-Major Evatt did not exaggerate when he wrote in his *Recollections*, that Tytler's memory was "a great bond," drawing together all who had ever served under him.

An excellent opportunity for withdrawing from the Kuram presented itself at the close of Tytler's expedition. Zaimukhts, Urakzais, Ghilzais had had their lesson, and as Roberts's line of communications with India had been definitely transferred to the Khyber, the Kuram had ceased to play any part in the military operations still being

carried on in Afghanistan. As a possession it was worthless, and the state of things existing in its garrison, faithfully reported by Watson to the Indian Government, was the strongest possible argument for abandoning it. The 1st Bengal Cavalry had a hundred and seven men on sick leave; the 1st Bengal Infantry two hundred and fifty men, and the 21st Punjab Infantry two hundred men, in hospital or on sick leave. Further, these regiments and the 20th Punjab Infantry, an exceptionally healthy corps, taken together were five hundred and forty-eight below their strength, and for this shortage there was no remedy, as their commanding officers informed Watson that recruits would not join them so long as they remained in this inhospitable and detested region. The preponderance of opinion among the higher political and military authorities in India, was in favour of acting on the advice implied in Watson's candid reports.<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederick Haines, the Commander-in-Chief, laid stress on the fact that, as a consequence of choosing the Shutargardan road for Sir F. Roberts's advance on Kabul, that commander had been obliged to cut himself off from his base and turn his force into a flying column;<sup>2</sup> but Lord Lytton could not be brought to abandon a route on which he had placed such high hopes, and the Kuram continued to absorb and wear down regiments whose services would have been useful elsewhere, till, at the end of the war, a new Viceroy recalled its garrison to India, and British claims on the province fell, for a time, into abeyance.

<sup>1</sup> "So far as I can judge, the present preponderance of opinion on the part of our higher military and political authorities is in favour of treating the Khyber as our main permanent line of advance towards Kabul, and either abandoning or leaving unimproved our present advanced position in the Kuram." (Minute by Lord Lytton, dated Simla, 20th May, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> "As regards the Kuram line, it is certainly true, as pointed out by his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, that General Roberts, when advancing upon Kabul by this line, was obliged to cut himself off from his base of operations, and that, until that base was transferred to the Khyber, his force was virtually acting as a flying column." (Minute by Lord Lytton, dated Simla, 5th June, 1880.)



## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. The forcing of the Zawo Defile is a fine example of how an operation of this kind should be conducted. The flanking columns, while securing the safety of the main body marching in the bed of the stream, continued to be in touch with it, and were able to support its turning parties. But, however deserving of praise as a military operation, the invasion of Zawo was of doubtful value from a political point of view. Its object was to impress the Zaimukhts and all their neighbours with the conviction that no corner of their territories was so remote that the arm of the Indian Government could not reach it; but, in teaching them this lesson, it also taught them another, viz. that though British troops may always be able to penetrate into the very heart of the hills, they can barely maintain themselves there for a day. It was this inability which drove Tytler into adopting a method of punishment repugnant to humanity and justice. For lack of time to destroy thoroughly the defences of the villages—a penalty that falls on the men of the tribe—he burned the villages themselves, thus inflicting great suffering on its women and children; and what makes his action in this matter the more indefensible is the strong probability that the people of that distant valley had had nothing to do with the outrages thus harshly avenged; the guilty villages—all known to the political officers—were those lying on or near the British border, and if there was to be any destruction of houses, it should have been confined to them.

OBSERVATION II. The successful invasion of the Zawo Valley demonstrates the great value of Mountain Artillery. Tytler himself expressed the opinion that in the absence of such guns the operation would have failed.



## CHAPTER XIII

### Re-Occupation of Gandamak

#### COMMUNICATION WITH KABUL TEMPORARILY OPENED

THE Indian Government's decision to send the force destined to avenge the massacre of the British Mission *via* the Shutargardan, was determined by the desire for rapidity of action, and with a full realization of the fact that Sir F. Roberts must be furnished, as early as possible, with some less precarious line of communication with India than that by which he himself had marched. With this object in view steps were taken to re-occupy the Khyber route as far as Gandamak, and to provide a moveable column to be employed in opening up, and keeping open, the road between that point and Kabul.

Major-General R. O. Bright<sup>1</sup> was appointed to the command of the Division mobilizing for these purposes, the composition of which was :—

Major-General R. O. Bright, C.B., Commanding.

Captain E. W. H. Crofton, Aide-de-Camp.

Captain J. H. Barnard, Aide-de-Camp.

Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. Wemyss, Chief of the Staff.

Major W. J. Boyes, Assistant Adjutant-General.

Captain the Hon'ble C. Dutton, Assistant Quartermaster-General.

Captain R. O'S. Brook, Provost-Marshal.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Onesiphorus Bright was born in 1824, and entered the Army in 1842. Served throughout the Crimean War of 1854-55; present at the battles of Alma, Inkerman, attack on the Redan, and final assault of Sevastopol; Brevet of Lieutenant-Colonel. Also the Hazara campaign of 1868, when he commanded the leading column in the attack on the Black Mountain. In 1879, he was commanding the Meerut Division. A man of good, sound common sense, always ready to accept responsibility and support his subordinates, Bright enjoyed the respect and confidence of all his officers.—H. B. H.

# RE-OCCUPATION OF GANDAMAK

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## MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

Deputy Surgeon-General H. B. Hassard, Principal Medical Officer.

## COMMISSARIAT DEPARTMENT.

Major N. R. Burlton, Principal Commissariat Officer.

## VETERINARY DEPARTMENT.

Veterinary-Surgeon F. F. Collins, Principal Veterinary Surgeon.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. A. Lockhart, Road Commandant.

Lieutenant E. B. Coke, Assistant Road Commandant.

Lieutenant A. A. Rawlinson, Assistant Road Commandant.

Lieutenant-Colonel H. St. G. Tucker, Director of Transport.

Major J. C. T. Humphrey, in charge of Field Treasure Chest.

Lieutenant J. B. MacDonnell, in charge of Signalling.

## ARTILLERY.

Colonel C. R. O. Evans, Commanding.

Captain R. A. Lanning, Adjutant.

Captain R. H. S. Baker, Orderly Officer.

I-A Royal Horse Artillery, Major M. W. Ommaney.

C-3 Royal Artillery, Major H. C. Magenis.

11-9 Royal Artillery (Mountain Guns), Major J. M. Douglas.

13-9 Royal Artillery (Heavy Guns), Major C. W. Wilson.<sup>1</sup>

No. 4 Hazara Mountain Battery, Captain A. Broadfoot.

Ordnance Field Park, Major S. Cargill.

## ENGINEER DEPARTMENT.

Lieutenant-Colonel D. Limond, Commanding Royal Engineer.

Major E. T. Thackeray, V.C., 2nd in Command.

No. 2 Company Sappers and Miners, Lieutenant J. C. L. Campbell.

No. 3 Company Sappers and Miners, Captain H. Dove.

No. 5 Company Sappers and Miners, Lieutenant E. S. Hill.

No. 6 Company Sappers and Miners, Lieutenant W. F. H. Stafford.

<sup>1</sup> General Roberts having asked for Heavy Guns, Major Wilson's Battery marched into the Khyber Pass, but was sent back, owing to the difficulties of the road—H. B. H.

## 1ST BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General C. J. S. Gough, V.C., C.B., Commanding.  
Captain M. G. Gerard, Brigade-Major.  
Major A. A. A. Kinloch, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Major H. J. Hallows, Brigade Transport Officer.  
Lieutenant F. H. R. Drummond, Orderly Officer.  
Captain L. Tucker, Political Assistant.

*Cavalry.*

10th Bengal Lancers, Major W. H. Macnaghten.  
Guides Cavalry, Major G. Stewart.<sup>1</sup>

*Infantry.*

2-9th Foot, Lieutenant-Colonel W. Daunt.  
2nd Gurkhas, Major A. Battye.  
Guides Infantry, Major R. B. Campbell.<sup>1</sup>  
4th Gurkhas, Major F. F. Rowcroft.  
24th Punjab Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel F. B. Norman.  
45th Sikhs, Lieutenant-Colonel F. M. Armstrong.

## 2ND BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General C. G. Arbuthnot, C.B., Commanding.  
Captain J. Cook, Brigade-Major.  
Captain C. A. Carthew, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.

*Cavalry.*

6th Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers), Lieutenant-Colonel J. Fryer.  
3rd Bengal Cavalry, Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. D. Mackenzie.  
17th Bengal Cavalry, Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. Watson.

*Infantry.*

51st King's Own Light Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel C. Ball-Aston.  
22nd Punjab Infantry, Colonel J. J. O'Brien.  
27th Punjab Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Hughes.

## 3RD BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General J. Doran, C.B., Commanding.  
Major H. P. Pearson, Brigade-Major.  
Lieutenant F. C. Maisey, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. Jenkins commanded the Corps of Guides, which consisted of 2 squadrons Cavalry and 8 companies Infantry.

*Infantry.*

- 1-12th Foot, Colonel G. F. Walker.
- 2nd Bengal Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel T. N. Baker.
- 8th Bengal Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel R. Smith.
- 30th Punjab Infantry, Colonel T. W. R. Boisragon.
- 31st Punjab Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel F. Tweddell.

Total 11,600 of all ranks and 24 guns.

From these figures considerable deductions must be made, for the troops in actual occupation of the Khyber included in Bright's force, were in a sickly condition, seven hundred and twenty men out of twelve hundred and eighty at Ali Masjid being in hospital; and those belonging to the Peshawar garrison were in little better case.<sup>1</sup> Five thousand men were to be held in reserve, partly at Peshawar, partly at Rawal Pindi; and as the Bengal Army was unable to furnish all the troops needed for both forces, the 1st, 4th, and 15th Regiments Madras Infantry, and A, C, and I companies Madras Sappers and Miners, were to be mobilized and sent to the last-named station. Bright's Division was divided into three Brigades, the first of which, under Brigadier-General Charles Gough, was to push on as quickly as possible to Gandamak, and from this point, acting in conjunction with Roberts's troops, to keep open communication with Kabul. The Second Brigade, under Brigadier-General C. G. Arbuthnot—head-quarters at Jellalabad—was to be responsible for the safety of the line of communications between Basawal and Gandamak; and the Third Brigade, under Brigadier-General J. Doran—head-quarters at Lundi Kotal—for the security of the road between Jamrud and Basawal. Bright's head-quarters, as well as Gough's, were to be established at Gandamak, where provisions for ten thousand men for two months were to be collected.

<sup>1</sup> One of the regiments of this garrison was in such a deplorable state that it had to be relieved and sent back to Peshawar.—H. B. H.

Bright arrived at Peshawar on the 15th September, to find to his dismay that all available carriage both in the cantonments and the District—even a considerable portion of the moveable column carriage, which might at any moment be needed to move troops to reinforce threatened outposts—was being diverted to Kuram. Driven to the risky expedient of employing Afridi transport—much of it stolen by the tribes during the first campaign—to throw supplies into Lundi Kotal, he offered such liberal terms that contracts were freely accepted ; but owing to the great Mahomedan festival, the Id, their fulfilment was for a time delayed. Eventually, however, the Amir having written to prohibit all opposition to the advance of the British troops, supplies were taken forward as quickly as they could be collected.

By the 28th of September 1,385 British and 4,060 Native troops belonging to Bright's Division had concentrated at Peshawar, and Gough's Brigade consisting of

ARTILLERY.

I-A Royal Horse Artillery.

CAVALRY.

2 Squadrons 10th Bengal Cavalry.

2 „ Guides Cavalry.

INFANTRY.

2-9th Foot.

24th Punjab Infantry.

Guides Infantry.

Nos. 2 and 6 Companies Sappers and Miners.

started the same day for the Khyber, equipped with just half its proper allowance of transport.

Dakka was occupied on the 30th of September and Basawal on the 2nd of October. Here, defective carriage and lack of supplies resulted in a week's halt. All the mules on the Khyber line had been despatched to the Kuram, so Gough's transport consisted of camels and bullock

carts ; the beasts in poor condition, the carts in insufficient numbers. Between Dakka and Basawal his rear-guard had been eleven hours on the road, and the carts, as they came straggling in, deposited one load only to go back to bring up another. For supplies he had practically to look to the country through which he was marching, and, at first, the Afghan authorities—the Governor of Dakka and the Khan of Lalpura—refused to help him to collect them, on the ground that they could not do so without orders from the Amir. When these orders had been received, and they professed their willingness to obey them, the poverty of the people stood in the way ; for no price would they willingly surrender the food and forage which they needed for themselves and their livestock. In one way or another, enough was at last got together to warrant a further move, and Gough marched to Barikab and from thence, on the 13th, to Jellalabad, where the rumours that had already reached him of Roberts's arrival at Kabul were confirmed by a messenger from Major Hastings. The news was sent on to Divisional Head-Quarters at Lundi Kotal, and Bright's Chief of the Staff heliographed back the suggestion that Gough should send a flying column, under Colonel Jenkins, into Ghilzai territory to cut off fugitives from Kabul. The proposal may have appeared reasonable to men at a distance, but to the man on the spot it seemed little less than madness to ask him to split up a force numbering but three hundred cavalry and fourteen hundred infantry, and to scatter it over thirty or forty miles of wild and barren country, in the hope of capturing men who, at home among the hills, would have no difficulty in eluding the search parties ; so, with Jenkins's hearty concurrence, the General declined to be drawn aside from the work originally set him, and having collected a certain amount of supplies, marched on to Futtehabad, the scene of his brilliant action in the first phase of the war.<sup>1</sup> Here he found letters from Roberts, urging him to push on to Gandamak, and, having obtained Bright's

<sup>1</sup> See, Vol. II. Chapter XXV. of this History.



permission, he occupied that place on the 20th of October, with the Hazara Mountain Battery, 10th Bengal Lancers, 2-9th Foot, and the Guides. As soon as he could see his way to a further advance, he wrote to Roberts proposing that, on a day to be fixed by him (Roberts), one column should start out from Kabul and another from Gandamak to meet at some selected spot—a concerted movement which would, he believed, forestall and, probably, hinder a Ghilzai rising. Roberts accepted the proposal and named Seh Baba, a hamlet about midway between the two starting-points, as the place of meeting, and the 4th of November as the date of the movement.

During the interval of comparative rest thus secured to his force, Gough directed his efforts towards laying in supplies, nursing up his transport, and trying to ascertain the temper of the people around and in front of him. Local supplies were hard to obtain, those sent from India came in slowly, and the provision of transport was more difficult than ever, for at Gandamak the road came to an end, and the ponies drawn from Southern India that came dropping in, in batches, to replace the bullock carts, arrived sick and tired from their long journey and destitute of the equipment without which loads cannot be carried up and down mountain paths.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> As for information, there was little to be had of a trustworthy character, but by sending out some of the Pathans among the Guides, attired in ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Gough reported to Army Head-Quarters that these ponies were equipped with pad packs and had neither ropes nor fastenings to keep the pad in place, or to secure the loads in going up and down hill.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> The *Daily News*' Own Correspondent gives the following description of the congested state of the traffic at the Lahore railway terminus, and of "the barbarities" to which the poor dumb animals were subjected on their way up to the front :—

"At this moment five hundred waggons full of ammunition, stores, provisions, bullocks, ponies, mules, donkeys, and camels are blocking the Lahore railway station. . . . The other day I examined a long train of waggons in which the dumb, patient animals were packed like sardines in a box. . . . Six camels were dragged the other morning out of a train dead, and such sights are anything but uncommon." (*Daily News*, 12th November, 1879.)

hill dress, he did succeed in learning a little of what the people of the neighbourhood were planning. Two of these men, who had fallen among thieves, were released by a Mullah in the Jagdallak Pass. Taking them for travellers, the priest questioned them as to the numbers and position of the British troops, and, when they had told him that British tents lined the road between Jellalabad and Gandamak, he confided to them that three sections of the Ghilzais were ready to fight, but that their chief, Asmatullah Khan, had written that he was unable to oppose the *Feringis*. As for the Khugianis and Shinwaris, he did not think they would rise.

Meanwhile Arbuthnot's Brigade had advanced to Jamrud, and from Jamrud to Dakka and Basawal, whilst Bright had arrived at Gandamak, where, by the 3rd of November, he had concentrated twelve guns, six hundred and fifty-five cavalry, and two thousand two hundred and ninety-three infantry, a force which he deemed sufficient to allow him to spare the following troops for the expedition to Seh Baba :—

- 2 guns I-A Royal Horse Artillery on elephants.
- 4 guns Hazara Mountain Battery.
- 100 sabres 10th Bengal Cavalry.
- 200 „ Guides Cavalry.
- 435 rifles 9th Foot.
- 500 „ 24th Punjab Infantry.
- 500 „ Guides Infantry.
- 2 Companies Sappers and Miners.
- Strength of all ranks 2,192 men and six guns.

Under Charles Gough's command this column left Safed Sang on the morning of the 4th November, Bright joining it at the Surkab River, where the night was spent and a fortified post established. During the next day's march to Jagdallak, the tribesmen showed in some strength, but the crowning of the heights on either side the road defeated any plan of attack which they might have formed, and only a few shots were interchanged. Leaving thirty sabres and two hundred

rifles to hold Jagdallak, the force marched on the 6th, for Seh Baba, but at Kata Sang, four miles short of that place, the advanced guard of the Kabul Column was seen approaching. This force, consisting of

4 guns F-A Royal Horse Artillery .	Major Smyth-Windham,
12th Bengal Cavalry . . . .	Major Green,
67th Foot . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel Knowles,
23rd Pioneers . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel Currie,
28th Punjab Infantry . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel Hudson,

under General Macpherson, had entered on its part of the concerted movement on the 1st of November, in order that Sir F. Roberts might take advantage of its protection to examine personally the passes leading from Kabul to Jagdallak, with a view to selecting the least difficult of the two for the cart road which it was intended to construct between those places. As the slopes on either side the Lattaband Pass were found to be fairly easy, whilst the hills which shut in the Khud Kabul Defile were too rugged and steep to admit of a road for wheeled carriage being made over them,<sup>1</sup> the former was chosen, and orders issued that the work should be begun as early as possible and carried on by parties working from either end. The reconnaissance lasted two days ; on the 3rd of November Roberts returned to Sherpur, and on the 4th, whilst he was welcoming the Shutargardan garrison, Macpherson passed unopposed through the Khud Kabul Defile. On the 5th, he encamped in the Tezin Valley, and on the 6th joined hands with Gough's column at Kata Sang. The two columns remained only one day in touch with one another, just long enough to discuss the manner of their future co-operation. As Roberts required to keep

<sup>1</sup> Roberts telegraphed to Simla on the 4th of November as follows :—"I reconnoitred yesterday to within three or four miles of Tezin, proceeding by Charasia (? Chinari) Pass and returning by the Khud Kabul ; former is impracticable ; latter is easy as regards road, but there is a great deal of water even now. After rain, or when snow melts it would be impassable ; besides it is a difficult pass to force when occupied by an enemy. It can be turned, but it is doubtful if a cart road could be made over the hills which turn it."

one strong Brigade at Kabul whilst despatching another in the direction of Ghazni to collect supplies,<sup>1</sup> he naturally wished to place the greater part of the work of keeping open his communications with India on Bright's shoulders; and that General, when Macpherson had fully explained the position and difficulties of the Kabul Force, undertook to construct and hold a strongly entrenched fort two miles in advance of the Jagdallak Kotal, and to establish a fortified post at Pezwan, an important point about eleven miles beyond Gandamak. On the 7th of November, Macpherson marched for Kabul by the Lattaband route, the main body of his column which had halted at Seh Baba, being joined at Sarobi by the advanced guard from Kata Sang. The people of Sarobi, a village lying on the right bank of the Kabul River, in the midst of well cultivated lands, proved friendly; but with all their good will they could not furnish the troops with more food and forage than sufficed for their immediate needs, and Macpherson had to go further afield to make some provision for future use. He himself crossed the river with a small reconnoitring force, on the 8th of November, and from Naghalu, at the western end of the Laghman Valley, despatched foragers, escorted by a company of the 67th Foot, under Captain A. J. Poole, to Doaba, the point where the Panjsher, Togao, and Kabul rivers meet. The Safis of Togao, a peculiar race whom, on account of their light hair and eyes, the traveller Masson believed to be akin to the Kafirs, gathered quickly to defend their stores of grain and *bhusa*, and, on the 10th, some seven or eight hundred of them fell on the foraging party, killed three men of the escort, and wounded Poole and four privates of the 67th. This sudden attack threw the laden camels into such confusion that when the reinforcements sent off by Macpherson—four mountain guns,<sup>2</sup> a squadron of

<sup>1</sup> On the 8th of November, Roberts reported to the Commander-in-Chief, that "sufficient food for men has been arranged for, but *bhusa* (chopped straw) and forage are required in such large quantities some must come from a distance."

<sup>2</sup> These guns, which had belonged to Money's force, were sent up to Macpherson on Hugh Gough's return to Sherpur.—H. B. H.

cavalry, and two hundred and fifty infantry under Captain Swinley—arrived on the scene, they could not force their way through the disorganized transport train. Seizing the spur of a hill overlooking the road, Swinley brought his guns to bear on the enemy, and their accurate fire saved the foraging party from the toils that were rapidly closing round them. Unable to silence the guns, the Safis had no choice but to fly, followed up by the cavalry till Macpherson, fearing for the safety of a small unsupported force in a broken and tangled country, recalled them and withdrew with all his troops to his camp at Sarobi. On the 12th of November, he marched through the Lattaband Pass, and on the 13th, having detached two mountain guns, a wing of the 23rd Pioneers, and the 28th Punjab Infantry, under Colonel J. Hudson, to make the cart road over it,<sup>1</sup> he moved on to Butkhak, where he halted a few days to await the arrival from Kabul of a convoy of sick and wounded—sixteen officers, fifty-four European and forty-nine Native soldiers—and to see it safely across the Pass. This duty accomplished, he established a fortified post of fifty rifles at a convenient spot, and returned on the 19th November to Kabul with what remained to him of his Brigade. The same day telegraphic communication with India was opened, and Sir Frederick Roberts, having been given the local rank of Lieutenant-General, assumed command of all the troops from Kabul to Jamrud.

Whilst Macpherson was slowly making his way back to Kabul, Bright and Gough were busy looking to the safety of their part of the communications and preparing for the advent of winter. The Hazara Battery, a Squadron of the 10th Bengal Lancers, the Guides, and the 2nd Gurkhas, which had just joined the flying column, were left to construct and garrison the new forts near Jagdallak and at Pezwan, the Royal Artillery guns, a squadron of the 10th Bengal Lancers,

<sup>1</sup> Captain W. G. Nicholson, who had been with Colonel Money on the Shutargardan Pass, was sent from Kabul to superintend the construction of the road.—H. B. H.

the 9th Foot, and 24th Punjab Infantry, returning with the Generals to Gandamak, where large bodies of Khugianis and other tribesmen were employed in erecting defensive posts and shelters for the strong force which it was intended to concentrate there. On the 15th of November the 4th Gurkhas, reported by Gough to be "a splendid regiment in every way," arrived from India, and two days later, the work of laying out new cantonments on the site of the old having made sufficient progress, the greater part of the troops, organized in working parties, were shifted from Safed Sang to Gandamak.

On the 1st December, General Bright returned to Jellalabad with a view to preparing for an expedition into the Laghman Valley, whose inhabitants were proving no less hostile in this second phase of the war than they had shown themselves in the first.

Whilst Bright and his Brigadiers were struggling with the numberless difficulties attendant on moving and feeding troops with insufficient transport in a barren land, Sir Michael Kennedy had been busy organizing the new Supply and Transport Department, and when all the work which demanded his presence at Army Head-Quarters had been accomplished, he left Simla to inspect and superintend the arrangements in the field of operations from the railway terminus at Jhelam to Kabul, where he arrived on the 1st of December, accompanied by Colonel A. G. F. Hogg, Director of Transport, Bombay Army; Major H. B. Hanna, Army Head-Quarters Staff; Captain T. Deane, Assistant Secretary Military Department; Lieutenant A. F. Liddell, Aide-de-Camp to the Viceroy; and Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. A. Lockhart, who joined the party at Jellalabad, having been appointed Assistant Quartermaster-General at Kabul.

On his way, Sir Michael visited the equipping dépôts of Jhelam, Rawal Pindi, and Peshawar, and the Transport base and Field Commissariat dépôts at the last-named station; he also inspected the different posts on the Khyber line, where he had introduced the étappen, or staging system, thereby lightening the work of both troops



and transport.<sup>1</sup> Taking into account the short time that the second phase of the war had been in progress and the extraordinary difficulties created for Bright's Division by Roberts's hasty advance, the general result of the inspection was not unfavourable, yet it revealed many serious defects. Too often the animals in use were ill adapted to the conditions of their work and equipped with defective gear. Most of the transport officers had little or no experience of their duties, and some displayed small aptitude for them. It was difficult to ensure intelligent, trustworthy, and practical supervision, and for lack of it the cattle were neglected, ill-treated, and frequently defrauded of their food by attendants who, to use Kennedy's emphatic phrase, were "the sweepings of the bazaars," men who knew nothing about, and cared not at all for the creatures in their charge; and there was a dearth even of these miserable substitutes for the properly qualified muleteer or camel-driver, classes which seemed to have died out, killed by the hardships of the former campaign.<sup>1</sup> Little by little, these defects were remedied, and the experience acquired by Kennedy on his inspection journey and during his eventful sojourn at Kabul, enabled him to suggest so many useful improvements in matters of detail that, in the end, the whole complicated machinery of Transport and Supply moved with remarkably little waste and friction, and reflected great credit on the Department of which he was the head.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "We were absolutely driven to engage the sweepings of the bazaars; and even then there was great difficulty in procuring the full number needed." (*Memorandum on Supply and Transport Arrangements in 1879-80*, p. 8, by Lieutenant-General Sir M. Kennedy, K.C.S.I., R.E.)

<sup>2</sup> Sir M. Kennedy was ably seconded in all his work by Captain E. H. H. Collen, whose services he gratefully acknowledged. "To my assistant," he wrote, "I am deeply indebted. The merits of this officer are well known to the Government of India, and the talents he has brought to bear on all branches of military administration have, on many occasions, been of very great public benefit."

## OBSERVATION

Troops without transport are worse than useless, for, whilst waiting, they consume the supplies on which their future activity must depend ; yet at Army Head-Quarters there is always a tendency to order troops to move before the due provision for moving them has been made, and this tendency was never more noticeable than in the campaign of 1879-80.

"It has been the case all through these operations," so wrote Sir Michael Kennedy in his Report, "that the first thing that has been considered and determined on has been that certain forces should operate in certain places and directions. Troops have been pushed forward by rail, or other means, as rapidly as possible, and it has been expected that they should nowhere be delayed for want of either supplies or transport ; but the arrangements in both these important matters have sometimes, apparently, been held to be mere minor details connected with the movements of troops, and have not been regarded, as they evidently should be, as conditions precedent of the possibility of any military movement."

## CHAPTER XIV

### Martial Law in Kabul

THE work of retribution entrusted to the Military Commission appointed on the 16th of October went forward with ever increasing velocity till the 12th of November, the day after the proclamation of an amnesty, from the benefit of which all the leaders of the people were excluded.<sup>1</sup>

At first the number of persons arrested for either of the capital offences specified in the proclamation of the 12th of October, was small, consisting chiefly of men in official positions, suspected of having planned the massacre of the British Mission or of having stirred up the Kabulis to oppose the British advance, and against these it was not found easy to obtain evidence, even the greediest and most unscrupulous informer shrinking from openly betraying men whose death, sooner or later, would certainly be avenged ; but after the discovery of the muster rolls of some of the Amir's regiments, scores at a time were swept " into the net of the military commission " <sup>2</sup> by the simple process of surrounding a village and forcing its headmen to bring out every inhabitant whose name appeared on one, or other,

<sup>1</sup> Extract Proclamation by Sir F. Roberts, November 11th, 1879. " Further, I hold out no promise of pardon to those who, well knowing the Amir's position in the British camp, instigated the troops and people of Kabul to take up arms against the British troops. They have been guilty of wilful rebellion against the Amir's authority, and they will be considered and treated as rebels, wherever found."—*Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Hensman's *Afghan War*, 1879–80, p. 132.

of these rolls. The difficulty with regard to evidence, was got over by permitting Mahomed Hyat, the Indian Civilian, to whom in the absence of Pushtu-speaking British officers the task of beating up witnesses was assigned, to examine informers in secret,<sup>1</sup> the Commission accepting his report of their depositions instead of insisting on their appearing before it in person; a procedure which left the accused in ignorance of their accusers, and deprived them of the chance of proving their innocence by the production of rebutting testimony.<sup>2</sup> In ordinary circumstances a tribunal consisting of three British officers, however destitute of judicial experience they might be,<sup>3</sup> would have refused to send men to the gallows on doubtful and tainted evidence; but Roberts's Force, from the highest to the lowest, was so imbued with the conviction that, in intent, if not in actual fact, every Afghan was a participant in the crime it had been sent to avenge, that the duty laid upon the Commission seemed more that of selecting a certain number of scapegoats from a guilty population, than of carefully investigating and deciding each case on its merits. A similar state of mind had prevailed in the Mutiny and had found expression in indiscriminate and wholesale massacres; but, at that time, the Indian Government had at its head a wise and humane statesman—Lord Canning—and the Indian Army, a wise and humane soldier—Lord Clyde—both of whom did their utmost to stem the spirit of revenge which they saw to be breaking down the moral sense of their subordinates; whereas, in 1879, the Indian Government itself fanned the angry passions which policy and humanity should

<sup>1</sup> These informers may have been the personal enemies of the men they accused. Macgregor mentions such a case. "One of the accused was Abu Bakar, against whom there was a regular got-up case, the principal witness being his deadly enemy." (*Life of Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 141.)

<sup>2</sup> Hensman, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> The only officer belonging to the Judge Advocate General's Department at Kabul—Major C. A. Gorham—was not placed on the Military Commission.—H. B. H.

have prompted it to allay. When it is remembered that, in flat contradiction of the great bulk of the evidence already in Lord Lytton's hands,<sup>1</sup> his instructions to Sir F. Roberts—a commander whose recent doings in Khost had proved him to have more faith in force than in justice—were based on the assumption that every Afghan might justly be held responsible for the massacre of the British Embassy, there is little to wonder at in the bitter and callous temper which animated the British officers and men occupying Kabul, and left its fatal mark on the proceedings of the Military Commission. That temper is fully revealed in the diary of Colonel Charles Macgregor and the letters to the *Pioneer* of Mr. Howard Hensman, the newspaper correspondent, whom, in contravention of the Government's orders, Roberts allowed to accompany him. Both men shared it, but there was this difference between them, that, whilst the civilian saw nothing to regret in summary executions following on secret investigations, the soldier was tormented by doubts as to their justice and wisdom. Hensman's comment on the shooting of prisoners by Massy's troopers on the 8th of October that "as we are an 'avenging army,' scruples must be cast aside,"<sup>2</sup> is in striking contrast to Macgregor's criticism on the Government's orders that the punishment of individuals "should be swift, stern, and impressive."<sup>3</sup> "It cannot be short," so he wrote in his diary on the 15th of October, "unless we catch men whose guilt is patent. With all others we must inquire thoroughly.

<sup>1</sup> "So far as I am able to judge at present, the outbreak was entirely due to a quarrel about pay. The 'Ardel' regiment, stationed in the Bala Hissar, having demanded more than one month's pay offered to them, then maltreating and wounding Daud Shah, the general, and threatening the Amir and afterwards the Embassy. I should say that although there may have been disaffected and mutinous language, yet that the outbreak and its results were unpremeditated and unforeseen."—Memorandum dated September 14th by Colonel W. G. Waterfield, the experienced frontier officer, who examined all the escaped eye-witnesses to the attack on the Residency. See, *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Hensman's *Afghan War*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 98.

I do not believe it ever does good to kill men indiscriminately, and *I will not lend myself to it.*"<sup>1</sup> The difference is no less marked between the journalist's pleasure in the fact that Roberts's proclamation, issued from Zargan Shahr, "left no outlet of escape for all such persons as . . . offered armed resistance to the British troops advancing with the Amir under their protection,"<sup>2</sup> and the Chief of the Staff's objection to the killing of men "who merely fought against us," and his determination "not to sentence such men to death."<sup>3</sup> A few entries in his diary show that Macgregor was able occasionally to give effect to this resolve:—"Oct. 22.—Saved five men's lives to-day, that is to say, if I had not inquired into their cases, they would have been hanged." Oct. 24.—"Let two fellows free."<sup>4</sup> But the splitting up of what was originally intended to be a single Commission, over which he would have presided, into two—one for the collection of evidence, the other for the trial of suspected persons—left him with no power over the fate of the accused when once they had been passed on to the military tribunal. That there would have been fewer executions if he, instead of Massy, had been at the head of the Military Commission, may be inferred from his comment on the case of the Kotwal of Kabul, accused of issuing the proclamation that called upon the inhabitants of that city to oppose the British advance:—"There is no direct evidence to prove that the Kotwal ordered it to be made, and therefore there is not enough to hang him, though I daresay that will be done"<sup>5</sup>—a prediction quickly fulfilled; and his opinion of the kind of evidence which satisfied the Military Commission may be read between the lines in the following passage.

"*SHAH SANG*, Oct. 21.—I take the following from the notes of the proceedings of the Commission: (1) *Prisoner, Sultan Aziz*.—

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 136. The italics are Macgregor's.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Hensman, pp. 82, 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 130.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 140, 141.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138.



Mahamad Hyat states, 'the city people are unwilling to come forward openly; but I have ascertained beyond doubt that this man was the moving spirit on the night of the 5th to get people to go out and fight us. He was also present himself at the fight with a standard.' Accused simply denies his guilt. The Commission sentence him to be hanged. The Commission is composed of Massy, a captain of 72nd, and Moriarty. Eleven men have been hung (including two ordered to-day) up to date. I therefore intend to see that no prisoner goes to the Commission without a clear statement of the nature of the evidence, and without a chance of bringing witnesses in his favour."<sup>1</sup>

These entries all occur in October. From the 1st to the 4th of November, Macgregor was absent from Kabul, and from the day of his return till the 16th he was entirely occupied in drawing up the report on the events of the 4th of September, whilst the amnesty, rescinding that part of Roberts's Zargan Shahr proclamation which threatened with death, as rebels against their lawful sovereign, all persons who should oppose his advance, was issued on the 12th. The resolution to proclaim an amnesty, whether taken spontaneously or at the suggestion of the Home Government, must have reached Sir F. Roberts before the 9th of November, for, on that date, Hensman writes to the *Pioneer* that one was expected,<sup>2</sup> and on the 15th that journal published the following telegram, dated Kabul, November 10th:—"The amnesty is now being printed in Persian and will be published as soon as enough copies are ready;" yet, between the 9th and the 12th of November, a large number of men went to the gallows, condemned for a crime which that document admitted to have been no crime at all.<sup>3</sup> In the letter in which Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Hensman, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> Extract from Roberts's Proclamation of Nov. 11th, 1879. "I have now received information which tends to show that some at least of those who shared in the opposition encountered by the British troops during their advance on

Hensman predicted the speedy publication of an amnesty, he also mentioned the discovery of the muster rolls of the Afghan regiments and described the action that followed on their discovery. "Flying parties of cavalry," so he wrote, "are sent out, some with sealed orders, to bring in such men as have been marked down by informers eager to earn the rewards offered for the apprehension of guilty persons."<sup>1</sup> On the 8th, one of these flying parties, under General Baker's command, drew a cordon round the village of Indaki. The headman, in obedience to Baker's command, brought out thirty unarmed men, but this sacrifice did not satisfy the British General; and though he withdrew after disarming the inhabitants and taking from them as a fine thirteen hundred maunds of grain and three hundred loads of *bhusa*, it was with the threat of returning and burning the village to the ground unless the last man on his list was given up. From other villages that were visited eighteen men were captured that day; and the next, between twenty and thirty were brought in from Indaki.<sup>2</sup> On the 10th of November, eleven of the captured, or self-surrendered, men were executed; twenty-eight on the 11th, whilst Roberts was telegraphing the text of the amnesty proclamation to Simla, and ten on the 12th, the very day of its issue; and there is strong reason for suspecting that many of them suffered death for no other cause than that of having resisted the invasion of their country,<sup>3</sup> unless indeed Hensman's "inference that those who chose to fight against us must have so far committed themselves in prior

Kabul were led to do so by the belief that the Amir was a prisoner in my camp, and had called upon the soldiery and people of Kabul to rise on his behalf. Such persons, although enemies to the British Government, were not rebels against their own Sovereign."—*Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 162.

<sup>1</sup> Hensman, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> "These wholesale executions were mainly intended as a punishment to such as disregarded the proclamation issued at Zargan Shahr by General Roberts on October 3rd, and it is now thought an example, severe enough, has been made." (*Ibid.* p. 137.)

events as to make them in technical term 'accomplices after the act,'"<sup>1</sup> be accepted as valid.

The punishments decreed by the Military Commission were certainly "swift and stern," but the manner in which its sentences were carried out can hardly be described as "impressive." Within twenty-four hours of their conviction, the condemned, under the escort of a commissioned officer and fifty British soldiers, were marched to the gallows that had been set up in the Bala Hissar, "a fatigue party following with picks and shovels as grave-diggers;"<sup>2</sup> and, "daily, a little crowd of soldiers, camp-followers and traders from the city gathered near the 72nd (Highlanders') quarter guard, from which starts the road down the ridge. The soldiers, in shirt-sleeves, and with the favourite short pipes in their mouths, betrayed but faint curiosity, looking upon the culprits with hearty contempt;"<sup>3</sup> and Hensman seems to have shared this contempt, for he writes, that "such poor specimens of humanity as those marched daily to execution are of but little account in our sight"<sup>4</sup>—yet men who, by his own admission, marched "quietly in, surrendering themselves as calmly as if they were our own soldiers who had over-stayed their leave and expected a slight punishment;" who did "not attempt to conceal their names,"<sup>5</sup> nor "to deny their presence in the Bala Hissar or at Charasiab;" whose "fanaticism was (is) equal to all fortunes;"<sup>6</sup> whose courage—callousness, he terms it—"when waiting their turn at the foot of the scaffold (ten men were hanged at a time) was remarkable,"<sup>7</sup> might well have awakened a nobler feeling in the spectator of their fate; and though in a country, which breeds thou-

<sup>1</sup> Hensman, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 87, 88.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily News*, December 15th, 1879.

<sup>5</sup> Hensman, p. 134.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily News*, December 15th, 1879.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

sands of such "fanatics," "they would (will) not be missed,"<sup>1</sup> they certainly would not be forgotten in their own village and by their own kin.<sup>2</sup> Macgregor's confession, that "we are thoroughly hated and not enough feared. . . . We have been too cruel, yet we have not made them (the Afghans) quite acknowledge our supremacy; and they have not yet had time to appreciate our justice,"<sup>3</sup> shows that once again the soldier saw the facts of the situation created by cruelty, edged with contempt, more clearly than the newspaper correspondent.

There was one point, however, on which the two were of one mind. Both were eager to bring men of higher station than these poor villagers within the judicial net. "It makes one exasperated to see the rank and file of these wretches being marched off to execution, while their leaders are still at large;"<sup>4</sup> so wrote Hensman on the 9th of November; and again, on the 12th, he expressed his regret that leaders like Nek Mahomed and Khushdil Khan had not been in the ranks of the men who had daily passed on their way to the gallows in the Bala Hissar;<sup>5</sup> and Macgregor did all in his power to bring home the charge of treachery, both as regarded the attack on the Residency and the resistance offered at Charasiab, to other leaders of the people. The entries in his diary between the 15th of October and the 5th of November, show him busy from day to day taking evidence, examining Daud Shah, Yahiya Khan, the Kotwal, the Wazir, the Mustaufi, Zakariah Khan, and lastly the Amir himself,

<sup>1</sup> *Daily News*, December 15th, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> "They have hitherto traded upon our known weakness—the worship of the quality of mercy—and it is only now that they understand the new principle of retribution we have introduced into our policy. . . . But whether we withdraw again or not, there will be the tale of lives taken by our hangmen still to be counted over in the city and the villages; and who knows yet what powerful names may not top the list?" (Hensman, p. 139.)

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Hensman, pp. 134, 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138.

but to no purpose ; none of the suspected men could be brought to incriminate himself or the others. On the 24th of October, he writes that he cannot "get at any sign that the attack on Cavagnari was premeditated," and admits that he is "inclined to think it was not, but perhaps it may come out later on."<sup>1</sup> On the 31st, he mentions that he has "got on the track of a letter of the Amir's" which will, he hopes, "lead to something."<sup>2</sup> Evidently it led to nothing, for it is never mentioned again. On the 1st of November he writes that "the General evidently suspects the Amir to be implicated in a plot," but that he has "no evidence to that effect as yet."<sup>3</sup> Five days later, after taking the deposition of the Amir, who "let out nothing and complained of having been made a prisoner and being badly treated," he suddenly came to the conclusion that there was no use in going on with the inquiry and that the Commission should stop taking evidence and draw up its report. His own views of the result of the Commission's labours and the action that should be based upon them, he summed up in the following sentences :—"The upshot will be, there is no proof of the thing (the attack on the Residency) having been planned, though there are some grounds of suspicion that it was. There is no manner of doubt that the Amir was most apathetic, and did nothing ; and there are very strong grounds for suspecting that he was not quite free from conniving at the resistance offered to us at Charasiab. On the whole, he must never be again Amir, and had better be deported to India ; the same must be done to the Wazir, Mustaufi, Yahiya, Zakariah, and all that breed. The people are the very greatest set of brutes I ever heard of, and it is evident that they hate us—every one of them. I do not think Wali Mahomed's lot are one little bit better."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142. This was probably the unsigned letter attributed by Wali Mahomed to Nek Mahomed, discussed in a previous chapter.—H. B. H.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 144.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 146, 147.

The words of this entry are very carefully chosen to express the exact state of the writer's mind after he had had before him all the obtainable evidence against men whom he hated and despised, and certainly desired to prove guilty. They show, firstly, that trustworthy testimony to prove the massacre of Cavagnari and his companions premeditated had not been forthcoming, and that Macgregor still believed that only culpable apathy could be laid to the Amir's charge; secondly, that though the evidence which connected Yakub Khan with the resistance offered at Charasiab might be strong, his connivance at that resistance was slight. These being his convictions on the 5th of November, it is a shock to the reader of the diary to come, two pages further on, upon the following entry:—"Nov. 16.—Finished that d——d report. Roberts telegraphed that it was very able and exhaustive, and completely made out the Amir's guilt."<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to the Indian Government which accompanied the Report, Roberts expressed the hope that his Excellency in Council would "concur in the opinion that great credit is due to Colonel Macgregor and his colleagues for the patient and comprehensive inquiry, and for the skill with which the information elicited has been brought to bear on the main points at issue"—skill which had evidently been used to make that appear true which the Head of the Commission of Inquiry felt to be false. In this letter, moreover, Roberts did not go further than to claim that "the Amir's guilt" is "now established almost beyond question," and even this qualified opinion as to that guilt was followed by words which admitted the absence of all conclusive evidence in support of it:—"and I believe," so he went on, "that it only requires his removal from Afghanistan to produce such direct and certain evidence as will leave no room for future doubt, either as to his own complicity or as to that of his father-in-law and Ministers. Once the people are satisfied of the fact that

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Macgregor*, Vol. II. pp. 149, 150.



Yakub Khan and his Ministers will never again be in a position to take revenge on those who may have offended them, it will not be long before the *conclusive proof of their guilt* is forthcoming.”<sup>1</sup>

The prediction cannot have been fulfilled. Had fresh evidence against the Amir and his Ministers been brought to light after their removal from Afghanistan, one or other of the persons whose interest it was to show they had only received their deserts, would have recorded the fact, and there is no mention of it either in *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, Lord Roberts's *Forty-One Years in India*, or *The Life and Opinions of Sir Charles Macgregor*. So far as the fate of the accused men was concerned, the presence or absence of conclusive proof of their guilt was of no consequence, for, before the Report of the Commission was despatched to the Viceroy, Roberts had “received the orders of his Excellency in Council to arrange for the Ex-Amir's journey to India,”<sup>2</sup> and on the 1st of December, as has already been mentioned, Yakub Khan left the British camp at Sherpur under a strong escort.

A week later Yahiya Khan, Zakariah Khan, and the Wazir followed him into what was to prove a life-long exile, for the conditions under which the British army evacuated Afghanistan, in 1880, effectually closed that country to their return. Daud Shah who had been of great use to Roberts “in supplying information regarding the Afghan army,”<sup>3</sup> and the Mustaufi who was credited with being less unfriendly than the other prisoners and who might prove useful in the administration of the country,<sup>4</sup> were, for a time, permitted to remain.

Public opinion in India acquiesced in the deposition and deporta-

<sup>1</sup> This letter is given in Macgregor's *Life and Opinions*, 2nd Vol. pp. 150-152, and the italics are either Macgregor's or Roberts's.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 259.

tion of Yakub Khan, but not in the methods of the Military Commission.

An article in *The Bombay Review* of the 1st of November contained the following outspoken passage :—

“Now a word about the drum-head exemplary proceedings : it is plain that many facts under this head are being kept back, doubtless under orders from Simla. . . . Is it according to the usages of war to treat as felons men who resist invasion ? . . . It is plain that the authorities at Simla are bound to let the world know what has been done in this apparently random work of vengeance.”

A week later the same Review showed that it had a prevision of the consequences to be expected from the cruelties it condemned :—

“Instead of surprises during the week we have had some more depressing details of military executions with indications, here and there, that our campaign of retribution is sowing a harvest of hatred.”

Up to the middle of November, *The Bombay Review* was the only Anglo-Indian paper to protest against the policy of terror inaugurated by the Proclamation of the 12th of October ; but after the publication of the so-called Amnesty, journals in favour of the war and supporters of Sir F. Roberts were found denouncing the manner in which the work of vengeance had been carried out. “The Amnesty,” so wrote *The Times of India* on the 17th of November, “now offered to those Afghans who have fought against our troops since the 3rd of September, and indeed to all save those who were implicated in the Bala Hissar outrage, will be received with general satisfaction. The work of vengeance was so complete as to have become somewhat indiscriminate, and it is probable that General Sir F. Roberts received his orders to ‘cease firing’ direct from the Home Government who could scarcely venture to endanger their popularity further at this political crisis. In his Proclamation of the 11th inst. General Roberts confesses that he has been a little hasty . . . and it is to be regretted that a good many innocent persons should have been hanged while he

was making up his mind as to their degree of guilt. The story of the punishment of Kabul will probably never be really known, for with the exception of one correspondent, who was specially admitted to write a pleasant and safe account of the affair, the Government thoroughly succeeded in excluding all independent witnesses. The Proclamation offering head-money for all who fought against the British troops was in force for exactly a month ; the work of vengeance increased in rigour towards the end ; and just before the Proclamation of Amnesty was issued twenty-eight sepoys were hanged by way of emphasis, *although the printing of the Proclamation in Persian character had occupied some days.*"<sup>1</sup>

Four days after the appearance in *The Times of India* of these strictures on the work of the Military Commission, *The Friend of India*, a prominent Calcutta journal, ended an article in which it had discussed Roberts's claim to punish all those who had resisted his march since the Amir came to his camp, with the words :—

" We fear that General Roberts has done us a serious national injury, by lowering our reputation for justice in the eyes of Europe."

Public opinion at home shared this fear and expressed it in far stronger terms ; but the story of the awakening of the English people to a sense of the cruelties that were being perpetrated in its name, will be better told at a later stage in this narrative.

<sup>1</sup> Italics not in the original article.—H. B. H.

## CHAPTER XV

### Foraging and Village-Burning

WHEN the fiction of governing Afghanistan in Yakub Khan's name came to an end with the public announcement of his abdication, Sir Frederick Roberts determined to dispense with "the declared aid of any Afghan chief or Sirdar" on the ground that "no good could result from the introduction of any Afghan element into the administration, pending the final orders of Government as to the disposal of the country."<sup>1</sup> Probably he shared Macgregor's belief that he and his troops were universally hated and that "Wali Mahomed and his lot" were as little to be relied on as the adherents of the Ex-Amir; but however great and well-founded his distrust of the Afghan leaders, it was not long before he saw himself driven to interpose Native authority between himself and the common people.

On assuming the reins of government he had proclaimed that, in future, the collection of revenue and the expenditure of public money would be regulated by him, and had threatened with severe punishment anyone who disputed or delayed such orders as he might issue "in regard to the payment of taxes and other connected matters."<sup>2</sup> So far supplies sufficient for the current needs of the troops had been obtained in the Kabul market or collected, day by day, from the

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 165.

"Advise General Cæsar Berthier to treat the inhabitants well, to make himself loved by them, to leave them their constitution for the present, and to be as little as possible a burden to them." (Napoleon.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160.

surrounding country by native agents sent out under military protection, and the Force might have continued to subsist in this hand-to-mouth fashion till the opening of the Khyber route should enable it to draw upon India ; but Roberts had set his heart on laying in a five months' store of all necessaries before the advent of winter, and his first step towards the realization of this aim was the appointment of Afghan governors to collect the revenue, which, in Afghanistan, is always paid in kind, and to see that each district brought in the amount of bhusa, grass, and grain for which it was assessed—direct collection from village to village being discontinued.<sup>1</sup> The Sirdars selected were Mahomed Hussein Khan, brother of Wali Mahomed, for Maidan, Abdulla Khan for the Logar Valley, and Shahbaz Khan, whose mother was a Kohistani, for Kohistan, all three of whom accepted their appointments with the understanding that they were not only to be held responsible for the whole amount of the revenue due by their respective districts, but also that they were to be the instruments for inducing or compelling the peasants to furnish the extra supplies which Roberts had decided to exact from them.

There was no intention of robbing the peasant : every seer of grain, every maund of bhusa over and above the tribute owing to the State, was to be paid for, and by confiscating eight or nine lakhs of rupees claimed by the Ex-Amir as his private property, Roberts was able to send each governor to his post well furnished with money for the purpose.<sup>2</sup> The fuel problem, usually almost insoluble in Afghanistan, presented less difficulty than had been anticipated, for the timber obtained by the dismantling of the Bala Hissar, after providing for the building of additional sheds and barracks, left over a

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's principal Commissariat officer estimated the quantity of forage required to keep the Cavalry and Artillery horses, the mules of the Mountain Batteries, and the transport animals supplied for five months at 150,000 maunds (5,357 tons).—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Sir F. Roberts to Foreign Secretary. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 165.

surplus which, carefully stacked in the Sherpur cantonments, would, it was hoped, prove sufficient to carry the British Force through the winter.

It had been Roberts's intention to leave the collection of supplies in the hands of the newly appointed Afghan governors, and to use such of his troops as he could spare in overawing the population of Kohistan and Ghazni, but, on the 11th of November, an unexpected fall of snow put an end to this scheme. The snow soon melted, but the warning it had conveyed could not be disregarded; with winter at the door, it would have been the height of imprudence to despatch troops to points where, at any moment, they might be cut off from all communication with the main body; and unless the Cavalry Brigade were broken up and two of the Native Regiments sent away from Kabul, the pace at which supplies, especially supplies of forage, were coming in would have to be quickened.<sup>1</sup>

Mahomed Hussein Khan seems to have entered on his post on the 17th or 18th of November, and on the 21st, the day after Macpherson's return to Sherpur, General Baker followed him to Maidan for the purpose of taking over the stores that were awaiting removal, and of settling the country, which was in a disturbed state owing to the preaching of a Mullah who was reported to be collecting men and stirring up the people to resistance.<sup>2</sup> The column accompanying him Roberts describes as small, but the subjoined table shows it to have been large compared to the size of the force from which it was subtracted:—

2 guns G-3 Royal Artillery.
4 guns No. 1 Mountain Battery.
1 Squadron 9th Lancers.
2 Squadrons 14th Bengal Lancers.

<sup>1</sup> Only seventeen days' supply had been stored by the middle of November.  
—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram from Roberts to Foreign Secretary, Simla. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 164.



2 Squadrons 5th Punjab Lancers.  
500 Rifles 92nd Highlanders.  
400 Rifles 3rd Sikhs.  
400 Rifles 5th Punjab Infantry.

Yet it was evident that it would only just suffice for the work it had in hand, since, on the line of march, a large proportion of it would be required to guard the transport trains, consisting of between 2,000 and 3,000 animals, and, together with the troops, covering a distance of seven miles.

After halting for the night at Argandeh, Baker entered the Maidan Valley on the morning of the 22nd, and pitched his camp near the village of Naure Falad, 25 miles south-west of Kabul, where Roberts and his staff joined him the following day. The valley, about four miles wide, intersected by the river Kabul, was found to contain numerous villages and fortified enclosures, and to be rich in orchards and carefully irrigated cornfields, the produce of which had already been hoarded for winter use ; but, notwithstanding this appearance of plenty, Mahomed Hussein had failed to collect the whole of the supplies for which Roberts had made him answerable : all that they legally owed, the people had brought in, but nothing beyond that amount had he been able to induce them to surrender. Baker quickly broke down the resistance of the Maidan villagers by seizing their headmen ; but in the neighbouring Dara Nirikh Valley, Bahadur Khan, an influential Ghilzai Chief, refused to submit to the British demands. His obduracy was reported to Roberts on his arrival in camp, and he at once sent out a squadron of the 9th Lancers and one of the 14th Bengal Lancers with orders to capture the defaulter.

An eight miles' ride brought the little party into Khan Bahadur's territory, and after passing unmolested near several of his villages, it reached his stronghold. A number of men, gathered together in front of its gateway, rushed inside on the approach of the column, manned the walls, and fired a volley by which three horses were killed ; and

unsupported by infantry and guns, the cavalry had to confess its helplessness by immediate retirement.<sup>1</sup> Early the next morning, after placing tents and baggage for safety in a fort near the river in charge of the two field guns, a detachment of cavalry, and three hundred rifles, Roberts started out with the bulk of Baker's force to avenge the previous day's rebuff, and to teach the tribesmen, far and near, the danger of defying British authority. He met with no opposition on the march, and the valley itself was found to be deserted. The scenes that followed were graphically described by Hensman in a letter to the *Pioneer*, dated November 24th :—

“ All Bahadur Khan's villages, some ten in number, were marked down to be looted and burnt, and Sikhs and Sowars were quickly engaged in the work. The houses were found stored with bhusa, straw, firewood, and twigs for the winter, as well as a small quantity of corn, and as there was not time to clear them out, and we could not afford to leave a force for the night in such a dangerous position so near to the hills, orders were given to fire the villages and destroy the houses and their contents. No better men than Sikhs could be found for such work, and in a few minutes Bahadur Khan's villages were in flames, and volumes of dense black smoke pouring over the valley, a high wind aiding the fire with frantic earnestness.”<sup>2</sup>

Before applying the torch, the earthen corn bins, which are the special feature of all Afghan peasant houses, were smashed to pieces, and every hole and corner ransacked in the hope of discovering hidden treasure ; whilst outside, soldiers and camp-followers vied with each other in chasing down ducks, fowls, and donkeys, and the cavalry scoured the country, driving in the villagers' few cows and sheep.

With so many hands ready to help, a few hours sufficed to complete the work of destruction, and by evening the force, with all the

<sup>1</sup> Mitford's *To Kabul with the Cavalry Brigade*, pp. 142, 143.

<sup>2</sup> Hensman, p. 168.

loot worth removal, was back in camp, leaving the Dara Nirikh Valley "full of smoking ruins and blazing stacks."<sup>1</sup>

Next morning Roberts returned to Kabul, and Baker resumed his foraging. On the 27th, pushing on ahead of his infantry supports with only a handful of cavalry, he entered Ben-i-Badam, a village thirty miles from Kabul in the Wardak district, which was known to be full of disbanded soldiery. All the able-bodied inhabitants were out in the fields at their usual daily work, but the old men hastened to bring offerings of fruit and milk and grain and fodder. Troopers and horses were busily refreshing themselves when a number of armed men belonging to the Mullah's following were descried rushing down a neighbouring hill, evidently intent on cutting off the British retreat. A sharp skirmish ensued, and the little party had considerable difficulty in extricating itself from its awkward position and rejoining the infantry.

Returning next day with a large force, Baker drove the Mullah's men from the height above Ben-i-Badam, and burnt that village to the ground, believing, so he reported, that its inhabitants "were in league with the insurgents."<sup>2</sup>

By this time the process of settling the country by terrorizing its people, had borne fruit in such widespread disaffection that Roberts saw the necessity of concentrating his troops to meet emergencies that might, at any moment, have to be faced. Baker, recalled to Sherpur, left Maidan on the 30th of November, his withdrawal covered by his cavalry, lest the tribesmen should harass his march, and, perhaps, snatch from him a portion of the supplies that he had succeeded in wringing from them. Soon large stacks of bhusa and bags of grain near the Commissariat Gate<sup>3</sup> testified to the thoroughness of his foraging; but four days after his arrival in cantonments came the news

<sup>1</sup> Mitford's *To Kabul with the Cavalry Brigade*, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Hensman, p. 184.

that the unfortunate governor, Mahomed Hussein Khan, had been fallen upon and murdered, thus paying with his life for the assistance he had rendered to the despoilers of his people.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. No reasonable person will dispute the proposition that, in an enemy's country, a general's first consideration must be his troops ; but his duty does not end with them, especially when, as in Afghanistan in 1879, he has destroyed the national government and taken the administration of the country into his own hands, thereby making himself responsible for the welfare of its inhabitants. Had Sir Frederick Roberts contented himself with confiscating, for his own purposes, the revenue due to the Amir, he would have found himself in possession of ample supplies, wherewith to maintain his force until the Khyber route could be opened up, and provision convoys from India begin to arrive ; and the advent of that day would have been much hastened if, instead of employing nearly all his transport and a third of his troops in coercing the peasants into parting with food and forage necessary to their own existence, he had thrown his whole energy into the construction of a good cart road, the completion of which was soon to be retarded by dangerous and widespread disturbances due to his exactions and barbarities.

Even the appropriation of the supplies constituting the Amir's revenue to the maintenance of a foreign army, meant a heavy loss to the country, for the bulk of those supplies are always sold by the Afghan officials to merchants, and through them find their way back to the people.

OBSERVATION II. The policy of village-burning has been considered and condemned in connection with the invasion of Khost, and the condemnation pronounced upon it need not be repeated ; but the defence set up by Lord Roberts for the destruction wrought in the

Dara Nirikh Valley calls for comment. It is to be found in the 2nd Volume of *Forty-One Years in India*, p. 258, and runs thus : "Hearing that Baker was experiencing difficulty in collecting supplies, I joined him at Maidan to satisfy myself how matters stood. The headmen in the neighbourhood refused to deliver the *Khalsa* grain they had been ordered to furnish, and, assisted by a body of Ghilzais from Ghazni and Wardak, they attacked our Cavalry charged with collecting it, and murdered our agent Sirdar Mahomed Hussein Khan. For these offences I destroyed the chief *Malik's* fort and confiscated his store of grain, after which there was no more trouble, and supplies came in freely."

(1) Roberts left Kabul before Baker arrived in Maidan, therefore not because he had heard that his lieutenant "was experiencing difficulty in collecting supplies."

(2) The headmen in the Maidan Valley, as in other districts, did not refuse "to deliver the *Khalsa* grain," i.e. the Amir's share of their crops; on the contrary, the following passages from Macgregor's Diary, and Hensman's letter to the *Pioneer* of the 24th of November, show that they gave it without demur :—

"They have given the tribute grain and forage readily enough, but have evaded furnishing the amount we required in addition to this."<sup>1</sup>

Major Green, commanding the 12th Bengal Cavalry, "went as far as Killa-Haji and went to the different villages en route, and they expressed themselves quite ready to give up the grain due from them."<sup>2</sup>

(3) "Our Cavalry" were not attacked by the headmen whilst collecting supplies, but whilst attempting to capture Bahadur Khan ;<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hensman, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Macgregor, Vol. II. p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> "I at once ordered Captain Turner to go out to Nirikh with two squadrons of cavalry, and bring in Bahadur Khan quietly, if possible; if not, by force."—Roberts's Political Diary, 23rd November. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 177.

and the resistance met with was offered only at that chief's own fort and by his immediate followers.

(4) Sirdar Mahomed Hussein Khan was murdered not before, but ten days after, the punitive expedition into the Nirikh Valley; <sup>1</sup> consequently instead of Bahadur Khan's villages being burnt to avenge his death, he was killed in revenge for their destruction.<sup>2</sup>

(5) Lord Roberts would have it appear that he only destroyed Bahadur Khan's fort; but the following extract from his Political Diary tells a different tale :—

“I gave orders that Bahadur Khan's fort and the whole of the Umar Khel villages in its neighbourhood should be destroyed.”<sup>3</sup>

OBSERVATION III. Baker's apology for the destruction of the village of Ben-i-Badam is as unsatisfactory as Roberts's defence of the burning of Bahadur Khan's villages. Seeing that he took the place by surprise, there could have been no collusion between the inhabitants and the so-called insurgents; and to avenge on them a rebuff, which he had brought on himself by temerity and lack of caution, was as vindictive as it was impolitic.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Sirdar Mahomed Hussein Khan has been murdered in Maidan.”—Roberts's Political Diary, 4th December. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> “The men who killed him are said to have come down the Dara-Nirikh from the hills about Bahadur Khan's villages; and their action was in revenge for our burning of their villages.” (Hensman, p. 183.)

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel Macgregor in his Diary of the 28th November, 1879, referring to these outrages remarks :—“I do not think this burning of villages a good plan; it exasperates them (the Afghans) and does not funk them. To me it is specially repugnant as it reminds me of the days when they used to do the same with the Highlanders.” (Macgregor, Vol. II. p. 154.)



## CHAPTER XVI

### The Rising Storm

ROBERTS returned to Sherpur on the 25th of November to find himself confronted by dangers which grew in gravity from hour to hour. The executions in the Bala Hissar, the raid into the Chardeh Valley, the burning of Bahadur Khan's villages and of Ben-i-Badam had roused the people from the apathy into which they had sunk on the destruction of their government; and the man who could give direction to the awakening spirit of resistance, and overcome the tribal and personal enmities which render it so hard for Afghans to combine, had been found in the person of the Mullah, mentioned by Roberts in a telegram of the 17th of November as collecting men and trying to create disturbances in the country round Ghazni.

Ninety years old, and so infirm that he had to be carried from village to village on a bed, Mushk-i-Alam might well be accounted no formidable foe, and Roberts was inclined to accept the reports which described him as having little influence with the people; but facts soon proved that his power extended far beyond the district in which he had first been heard of. Ghazni, which its governor had abandoned to seek a refuge in the British camp, remained his head-quarters; but in Kohistan, in Maidan, in the Logar Valley, in Tagao, even in the Mohmand country, his voice was heard, or his messages received, and chief and peasant answered to the call which summoned them to destroy Roberts and his army, as their fathers had wiped out the forces of Elphinstone.

In this sudden awakening of the national spirit, the Governors appointed by Roberts found themselves powerless and despised. The headmen of Kohistan defied the authority of Shahbaz Khan, and openly proclaimed their intention of waging a Holy War against their foreign oppressors.<sup>1</sup> Sirdar Abdullah Khan, deserted by the Logaris, had to fly before a party of the Mullah's adherents, and, as has been already stated, Sirdar Mahomed Hussein Khan was "murdered apparently by men of Mushk-i-Alam's raising."<sup>2</sup> Kabul was full of rumours of an impending night attack on the cantonments; the city bankers asserted that the Kohistanis, acting in concert with Usman Khan, the chief of Tagao, were in force at Khoja Serai and might at any moment appear before Sherpur; Daud Shah predicted a general outbreak of disorder, and warned Roberts that the rebellion would not lack leaders, for Usman Khan of Tagao, Mir Bacha, the principal chief of Kohistan, and Faiz Mahomed, the Afghan general, who had closed the Khyber in the face of the Chamberlain mission,<sup>3</sup> had promised to throw in their lot with the insurgents.<sup>4</sup>

Day by day, Roberts chronicled in his Political Diary the reports that reached him, the steps he was taking to check disaffection, and the small success that attended on his efforts. He sent out Ibrahim Khan to help Shahbaz Khan, and between them they persuaded some of the Kohistani headmen to come in; but Mir Bacha held aloof, and there could be no certainty that those who did listen to the British General's exhortations and threats to destroy their villages would perform promises made to secure their dismissal to their homes.<sup>4</sup> He wrote to the hard-pressed governor of Logar to come in, and promised to send to his assistance if he could not escape unaided.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Political Diary, 23rd to 29th November. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram of the 7th of December. *Ibid.* p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Kabul Diary, November 30th to December 6th. *Ibid.* p. 191.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 191, 192.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191.

He held a durbar at which all were free to present petitions, but there were no petitioners.<sup>1</sup> Uncertain how far the predicted attack on cantonments might have for its object the release of the imprisoned Amir, he despatched Yakub Khan secretly in haste to India, and rid himself a week later of the dangerous presence of Yahiya Khan, Zakariah Khan, and the Wazir. He determined to retain Wali Mahomed to help him in settling the country round Kabul, and in his place appointed Hashim Khan as Governor of Turkestan;<sup>2</sup> but neither in that distant province nor yet close at hand did the change exercise any influence on the course of events. In one direction only was he successful: his unfailing cheerfulness inspired his troops with the fullest confidence in him and themselves. None of those who rode over the battle-field of Charasiab with him on the 5th of December, and heard him describe the action to Sir Michael Kennedy and the officers who had accompanied him to Kabul, could doubt that, whatever the difficulties pressing upon him, he felt certain of his ability to meet and overcome them; and the eagerness with which on the following day, he joined in a paper chase at the close of a picnic given in honour of the new-comers, lightened the hearts of men of less buoyant temperament than their chief's. From no word or look of his could anyone have guessed the load of anxiety that he was carrying about with him, anxiety which was not confined to the state of affairs outside cantonments. The knowledge that a vast enclosure full of combustible materials—wood and grain and fodder—to which Afghans of all sorts—all at heart enemies—had access, might at any moment become the prey of fire, was constantly present to his mind; and so, too, was the thought that the fidelity of his Pathan troops might not be proof against the efforts that he knew were being made to undermine it. In the Kuram he had learned to know that race feeling and the ties of blood could be stronger than the bonds of

<sup>1</sup> Kabul Diary, November 30th to December 6th. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 192.

discipline, and what had happened once might happen again; yet no precaution could be taken where it might be fatal to show distrust.<sup>1</sup>

There can, however, be no doubt that, notwithstanding his many anxieties, Roberts's outward attitude corresponded to his real convictions; had it been otherwise, he could not have been content to leave ugly gaps in his defences, nor have tolerated, close up to the walls of the cantonments, buildings and enclosures that would afford shelter to an attacking foe.<sup>2</sup> On the 30th November, the Chief of the Staff, after riding round the position, had warned the General Officer of the day, and the Field Officer on duty, to look to its flanks, and ordered the Commanding Engineer to throw up shelter trenches and sink gun pits on the Behmaru Heights; but the next day Roberts telegraphed to Simla that the weather was very cold, and that all hands were well employed in providing winter shelter—a proof that in his opinion the comfort of the troops still took precedence of their safety.<sup>3</sup> Up to the 6th of December, he seems to have thought that he could restore order by administrative measures only; but, on that day, the news that a number of Kohistanis were marching on Kabul, their leaders proclaiming a Holy War, must have convinced him of the futility of orders which had no display of force behind

<sup>1</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 300.

A very bad case of desertion had just occurred in the Kuram. A non-commissioned officer and two men of a distinguished Native regiment had walked off with their rifles, two hundred rounds of ammunition, and Rs. 4,000 belonging to the Telegraph Department; and General Tyler, to whom the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry had been sent, believed that the whole guard had been implicated in the crime.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> “It is easy to understand both why Sir F. Roberts dreaded originally to occupy the Bala Hissar permanently, and why he was tempted to place his troops in a place so undesirable, from a military point of view, as Sherpur. Still it is impossible not to feel, in the light of present events, that the decision was erroneous and in distinct contradiction to all the teachings of the past.” (*Times*' Correspondent, Kabul, December 22nd, 1879.)

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 179.

them, for he advised Shahbaz Khan's immediate return to Kabul, and detailed a force under Macpherson to seize Baba Kushkar, Mir Bacha's fort, lying about twenty miles from Sherpur.<sup>1</sup> Even then he cannot have realized the full gravity of the situation, for a telegram, which he sent to the Indian Government next morning, treated it very slightly :—"Kohistanis are assembling and inclined to give trouble. Some men under a Mullah, named Mushk-i-Alam, have collected again near Ben-i-Badam ; these people and the Kohistanis are too far away at present to take notice of. I am endeavouring to settle matters without proceeding to extremities."<sup>2</sup> That day Mushk-i-Alam moved from Ben-i-Badam to Argandeh, only fourteen miles from Kabul ; and a second telegram, which began with the admission that affairs round the city had been less satisfactory of late, ended with the announcement that, anxious as he was to avoid any further expeditions at present, he might be forced to send the troops out again.<sup>3</sup>

This message must have been intended to prepare the Government of India for the news that the troops had actually taken the field, for hardly had it been despatched when Roberts summoned a Council of War and laid before it his plan of operations, in which two forces, the one under Macpherson, the other under Baker, were to take part. Macpherson's column was to enter the Chardah Valley through the Nanachi Pass and halt at Aushar, three and a half miles from Sherpur ; whilst Baker's column was to march through the Sang-i-Nawishta Defile and over the battle-field of Charasiab, spend a night at Childukhteran, and next morning cross the mountains separating the Logar and Kabul Rivers, and strike the Maidan Valley at a point thirty miles west of Kabul and fourteen in rear of the enemy.<sup>4</sup> Then both columns

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> Brigadier-General Baker's Despatch, dated Kabul, 16th December, 1879.

were to advance on Argandeh, and crush or disperse the forces led by the Mullah and the Wardak chief, Mahomed Jan.<sup>1</sup>

No exception seems to have been taken to this plan, but Macgregor suggested that the Guides at the Jagdallak Pass should be directed to occupy the bridge over the Kabul River, near Butkhak, and Roberts accepted the proposal.<sup>2</sup> Inquiries, however, showed that the bridge in question was too far from the proposed scene of operations to make its occupation of any consequence, and the Guides were therefore ordered to march straight to Sherpur.

Before the Council broke up, it was settled that a Review of all the troops should be held the following day in the plain, lying between the Behmaru Heights and the lake of Waziristan, ostensibly for the purpose of presenting two non-commissioned officers and two men of the 72nd Highlanders with medals for distinguished conduct at the storming of the Spingawi Kotal in the previous December, but really as a preparation for the proposed military movements. Four thousand seven hundred and ten men of all ranks and twenty guns were present at that parade, whilst, to protect the cantonments and their precious stores, each infantry regiment furnished a guard of a hundred men; all pickets were warned to be on the alert; signallers were posted on the Behmaru Heights and over the Commissariat Gate, the gate nearest to the city; and all Hazaras employed within the walls were temporarily shut out. Thanks to these precautions, no untoward accident marred the success of the parade; and Roberts, returning to Sherpur, proud of his men and confident of their ability to carry his plan of operations to a swift and triumphant conclusion, despatched the following telegram to the Indian Government:—

“Parade of all troops was held this morning to present distinguished

<sup>1</sup> Mahomed Jan commanded the Afghan Artillery at the taking of Ali Masjid.

<sup>2</sup> “I suggested getting up the Guides and propose putting them at the bridge north of Butkhak, so as to try and keep the gentlemen at Baba Kushkar together till we can get the Maidan troops round them.” (Macgregor, Vol. II. p. 158.)



conduct medals to men of the 72nd Highlanders. The sight of the splendid-looking troops cannot but impress the people of Kabul, a large number of whom attended the parade. As the excitement in Maidan and Kohistan directions continues, General Macpherson will move this afternoon a short distance on road to Maidan, and to-morrow General Baker will proceed to Charasiab, and on Wednesday by the valley of the Kabul River to a point on the Ghazni road in rear of Maidan. As bringing up troops from the direction of Jellalabad will have a good political effect, I have ordered the Guide Corps to Kabul. They will probably remain only a few days here.”<sup>1</sup>

#### OBSERVATION

The plan of operations by which Roberts thought to secure the safety of the Sherpur Cantonment ignored every canon of the art of War.

One of the principles most emphatically laid down by Napoleon was this—that an army should always keep its columns so united as to prevent an enemy from passing between them with impunity. Baker’s and Macpherson’s columns at the moment when their joint action was to begin, were to be so far apart as to leave the Afghans ample time to throw themselves on one or the other, if the Mullah and Mahomed Jan elected to fight, or to withdraw into the hills, if they should decide to avoid an engagement. For the strategy that he adopted, Roberts should have had not five thousand, but twenty thousand men. His army was far too weak to attempt extended operations; its safety lay in concentration; to disseminate it, was to court disaster. To quote Napoleon again:—the principles which have guided all great captains have been, “to keep their forces united; to leave no weak part unguarded; to seize with rapidity on important

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 180.

points." These principles were finely exemplified by Nott when, in January 1842, he found himself in a similar position to that held by Roberts in December 1879. Some fifteen to twenty thousand tribesmen under Prince Safter Jung had assembled about forty miles from Kandahar, and the Political Officer was urgent with the General to attack them. "I have repeatedly told you," wrote Nott in reply, "that if he (the Prince) approached within twelve or fifteen miles of this station, I would move out and disperse the rebels. . . . It would, indeed, be truly absurd were I, in the very depth of winter, to send a detachment wandering about the country in search of the rebel fugitive, destroying my men amidst frost and snow, killing the few carriage cattle I have left, and thus be totally disabled at the proper season of moving ten miles in any direction from the city, or even of the means of falling back should that, unfortunately, ever become necessary." Four days after writing these words, Nott reaped the reward of his wisdom. He had said that he would move out if the rebels came within twelve or fifteen miles of Kandahar; he waited till they were within five or six miles of that city, and then issuing from cantonments with a compact body of troops, he crossed the river Argandab, attacked Safter Jung's position, and in twenty minutes' time carried it and dispersed the entire rebel army.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "To have the greater force and then divide it so that the enemy can attack either or both fractions with decisively superior numbers, is the acme of military stupidity; nor is it less stupid because in practice it has been frequently done! In it has often consisted the vaunted operation of surrounding an enemy, bringing him between two fires, and so forth; pompous and troublesome combinations by which a divided force, that could perfectly well move as a whole, starts from two or three widely separated points to converge upon a concentrated enemy, permitting him meanwhile the opportunity, if alert enough, to strike the division in detail." (Letter of Captain Mahan to the *Times* of the 1st of December, 1898.)

If it is the acme of stupidity to divide the larger force, how must we characterize the dividing of the smaller one?—H. B. H.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Preliminary Operations of the 8th, 9th, and 10th of December, 1879

Soon after the close of the parade held on the plain of Waziristan on the morning of the 8th of December, Brigadier-General Macpherson left Sherpur with—

4 guns F-A Royal Horse Artillery,  
4 guns No. 1 Mountain Battery,  
1 Squadron 9th Lancers,  
2 Squadrons 14th Bengal Lancers,  
401 Rifles 67th Foot,  
509 Rifles 3rd Sikhs,  
393 Rifles 5th Gurkhas,

to take his share in the joint movement by which Sir F. Roberts hoped to break the backbone of the insurrection of which Mushk-i-Alam was the soul, and Mahomed Jan the most competent leader. In obedience to his instructions, Macpherson camped that night at Aushar, a village, as already mentioned, only three and a half miles from cantonments, on the western side of the Nanachi Pass, at the foot of the range of hills which separates the Chardeh Valley from Kohistan. He had just resumed his advance the next morning when he was stopped by an order from Roberts, bidding him remain at Aushar for the double purpose of drawing on the enemy by an appearance of hesitation, and of leaving Baker time to take up a position across the road by which the Afghan army

defeated by him—Macpherson—would try to escape.<sup>1</sup> This meant two days of inaction, for Baker's Brigade, which had only just left cantonments when the order was despatched, had thirty miles to march before it could place itself across the tribesmen's assumed line of retreat; and there were good grounds for thinking that the delay might have very serious consequences, as Lieutenant-Colonel Lockhart, who had been scouting towards Argandeh, had seen considerable bodies of men moving northward evidently with the intention of joining the insurgents in Kohistan.<sup>2</sup> Their number showed that the insurrection had already assumed very large proportions, and the direction taken by them pointed to the likelihood that, as the British troops at Aushar advanced on Argandeh, thousands of tribesmen would pour down in their rear, cutting their communications with their base, and perhaps capturing Sherpur before they could fall back to the assistance of its garrison, whilst a retrograde movement, whether successful or unsuccessful in its immediate object, would mean the abandonment and almost certain destruction of Baker's Brigade. These considerations weighed so heavily with Macpherson that, in transmitting Lockhart's report to Head-Quarters, he suggested the recall of Baker and a combined movement of the two Brigades against the Kohistanis.<sup>3</sup> So far as Baker's recall was concerned, Roberts took no notice of the suggestion, but he directed Macpherson to march himself the next day into Western Kohistan, and disperse the insurgents assembled at Mir Karez, a village ten

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch, dated Camp, Kabul, 23rd January, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> Extract from Brigadier-General H. Macpherson's Diary, dated Camp Killa Aushar, 9th December, 1879.

"This morning I had just started with the Force when I got orders to halt in order to allow Baker time to get in rear of the enemy. The result has been that we missed a fight to-day, as the parties I sent out to reconnoitre came on the enemy going to Kohistan, right across the route we should have taken."

<sup>3</sup> "I have sent in to Roberts to suggest that Baker, who has gone towards Charasiab, should be recalled and sent to Kohistan direct from Kabul, while I move north." (Ibid.)

miles to the north-west of Aushar, before they could be reinforced by the tribesmen seen by Lockhart;<sup>1</sup> and as the country to be traversed was very difficult, he was directed to take with him only the infantry and mountain guns. There was no road through the mountains immediately behind Aushar, so Macpherson began his march on the morning of the 10th by recrossing the Nanachi Pass—a movement which, if observed, would lead the Afghans to believe that he was returning to Sherpur—and then, turning northwards, followed a path leading to the Surkh Kotal, on the further side of which he knew he should come upon the enemy. Reaching the foot of the pass at 10.30 a.m., and having carefully hidden his transport and baggage, he led his troops up a deep cleft in the hill-side. At the upper end of this ravine, he halted, whilst Colonel Lockhart and Captain Straton were trying to ascertain the state of things on the other side of the Kotal. At this time, some five or six thousand Kohistanis were occupying Mir Karez and in position on the hills covering that village, and as reinforcements were approaching from the west and south it seemed probable that all these different bodies would have to be fought at one time; but fortunately, about noon, Lockhart and Straton discovered a considerable force, with several standards, just over the crest of the hill, within striking distance of the point where the British troops were lying concealed. Swiftly and silently, Macpherson made his dispositions. Colonel Money, with two mountain guns, one company of the 67th Foot, and five companies 3rd Sikhs, was to hold the Kotal; two companies of the 67th Foot under Major G. Baker, and two of the 5th Gurkhas, under Captain J. Cook, were to creep to the top of the Pass and fall upon the unsuspecting Kohistanis; the squadron

<sup>1</sup> Roberts makes no mention of Macpherson's suggestion in his despatch, but, in referring to Lockhart's report, he writes:—"At the same time I heard that a considerable force of Kohistanis had collected at Karez Mir, about 10 miles to the North of Kabul, and feeling how desirable it was to disperse them before they could be joined by the enemy hastening from the west, I directed General Macpherson to change his line of advance and attack the Kohistanis."

of the 14th Bengal Lancers was to threaten the enemy's line of retreat, and three companies of Sikhs were to harass their left flank and lend support to the cavalry. The plan was crowned by complete success. Taken by surprise, the tribesmen rushed helter-skelter down the hill, followed up by their assailants, the Sikhs supporting the cavalry in the pursuit, and the two together enfilading the fugitives' left rear with carbine and rifle fire, whilst the main body, abandoning the Pass which had no further need of defenders, hurried forward to take their part in the fray. So swift and certain were the British movements that the enemy never had a chance of rallying, and their panic, communicating itself to their comrades in and around the village, they, too, gave way, and the whole position was carried with extraordinary rapidity and ease, the guns, quickly brought up by Captain Morgan, inflicting severe loss on the flying rabble, and the few men who sought to defend the standards being bayoneted beside them,<sup>1</sup> whilst the only casualties on the British side were one officer,

Major FitzHugh, 5th Gurkhas,  
One man, 67th Foot,  
Four men, 3rd Sikhs,  
One man, 5th Gurkhas,

wounded.

Having satisfied himself that the Kohistanis were, for the time being, completely broken up, Macpherson encamped his troops outside Mir Karez, the inhabitants of which village, thankful not to have their property plundered and their houses burnt over their heads,<sup>2</sup> readily brought in supplies. Here, in the course of the afternoon, he received a communication from Roberts which instructed him to march early next morning direct on Argandeh, to follow up the enemy, who had been observed to be retreating to the south and

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's first Despatch, dated 27th December, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the war Macpherson was distinguished for his humanity.—  
H. B. H.



west, and to endeavour to drive them towards Baker. The Cavalry and Horse Artillery guns, so he was informed, would leave Killa Aushar at 9.30 a.m. and, marching by the Kabul-Ghazni road, rejoin the Brigade where that road meets the path from Mir Karez, fifteen and a half miles from Sherpur.

Instructions corresponding to this order were given by Roberts personally to Brigadier-General Massy, who was to command the Guns and Cavalry in the morrow's operations. Throughout his advance Massy was to communicate with Macpherson and to act in conformity with that officer's movements; to proceed cautiously and quietly, feeling for the enemy, but on no account to engage him till General Macpherson had come into action.<sup>1</sup> Roberts further explained to Massy that some fifteen hundred to two thousand Kohistanis were retreating from Mir Karez, and that these he was to stop and hold should they debouch from the hills into the Chardeh Valley, Baker intercepting them if they retired towards Maidan.<sup>2</sup>

All that day and the previous day, the last-named General with his Brigade, consisting of—

4 guns No. 2 Mountain Battery,  
2½ Squadrons 5th Punjab Cavalry,  
450 Rifles 92nd Highlanders,  
450 Rifles 5th Punjab Infantry,  
25 Men Sappers and Miners,

had been making his way to the point from which he was to co-operate with Macpherson. Leaving Sherpur on the morning of the 9th of December, he marched through the Sang-i-Nawishta defile, crossed the battle-field of Charasiab, and halted for the night at Childukhteran, a village about fourteen miles from cantonments. To deceive the Mullah and Mahomed Jan as to his real intentions, he had given out that his object was to disperse a large number of armed men who, for some

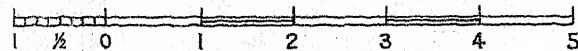
<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> Massy's Despatch, dated 20th December, 1879.

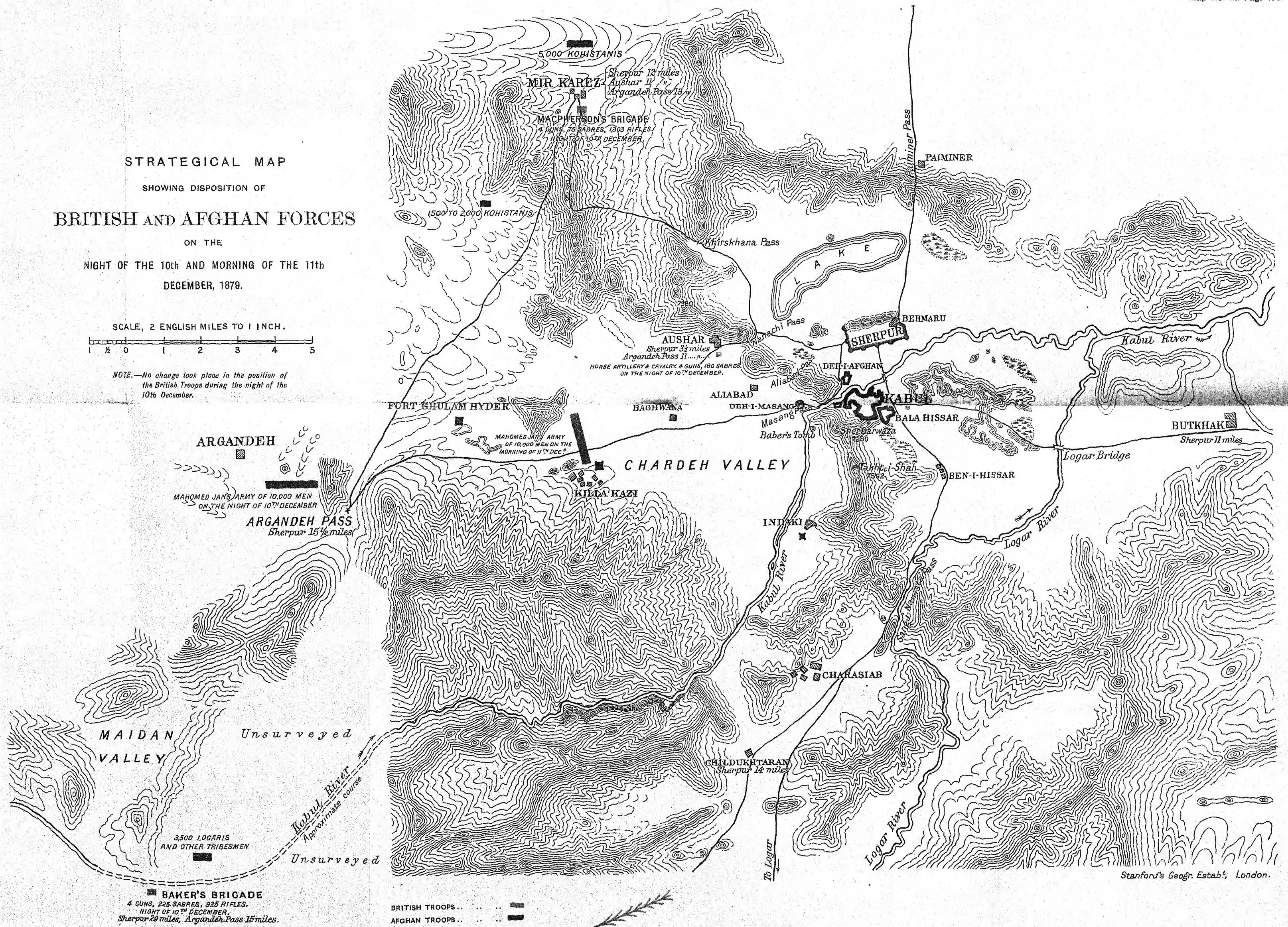


STRATEGICAL MAP  
SHOWING DISPOSITION OF  
BRITISH AND AFGHAN FORCES  
ON THE  
NIGHT OF THE 10th AND MORNING OF THE 11th  
DECEMBER, 1879.

SCALE, 2 ENGLISH MILES TO 1 INCH.



*NOTE.*—No change took place in the position of the British Troops during the night of the 10th December.



Stanford's Geogr. Estab<sup>t</sup>; London.

Compiled by Colonel H. B. Hanna, from  
Sheet 6, Northern Afghanistan, Survey of India.



surveye



time past, had been assembling in the Logar Valley.<sup>1</sup> At Childukhteran he learned that an advanced body of the Logaris had been the previous day within twenty miles of that village, moving in the direction of Maidan. The second day's march proved longer and harder than the first, the difficulties of the road being aggravated by the variations of temperature—bitterly cold in the early morning, then hot, then cold again.<sup>2</sup> For the first eight miles, the track ran through comparatively open country, but, in changing its direction from south-west to due west, it entered on a succession of stony downs, badly cut up by drainage lines, which led to the foot of the steep range of hills that separates the Logar from the Kabul Valley. It was nearly sunset when Baker's advanced guard gained the summit of the high main ridge, and darkness had fallen before the main body groped its way down the bed of a frozen torrent into the Kabul Valley, and pitched its camp within half a mile of the river, the rear-guard spending the night just below the top of the pass,<sup>3</sup> whilst the Logaris, who had been crossing the same range further to the north, took up a position between the British column and Sherpur. The relative positions of the hostile forces on the night of the 10th were, therefore, as follows :—

## BRITISH.

Horse Artillery and Cavalry at Killa Aushar, three and a half miles west of Sherpur and eleven miles east of the Argandeh Pass :—4 guns, 180 sabres.

<sup>1</sup> Brigadier-General Baker's Despatch, dated Kabul, 16th December, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> "The cold at starting was very severe, and now as we entered the lower barren hills, the wind dropped, whilst the sun's rays poured down with a fierceness out of all comparison with the previous cold, and men began to fall out." (Duke's *Recollections*, p. 221.)

<sup>3</sup> "As the Mountain Battery to which I was attached emerged from the nullah, just enough light remained to see our camp was to be pitched on a stony plateau, sloping gradually down to the Kabul river, running about half a mile below. The camp was laid out in pitch darkness, and the coldness of the wind was intense. We all heartily pitied the position of the rear-guard, near the top of the pass, for it would be utterly impossible now to bring in all the baggage." (Ibid. p. 222.)

Macpherson's Brigade at Mir Karez, twelve miles north-west of Sherpur and eleven miles north-east of the Argandeh Pass :—4 guns, 75 sabres, 1,303 rifles.

Baker's Brigade on the right bank of Kabul river, 29 miles from Sherpur and fifteen miles south-east of the Argandeh Pass :—4 guns, 225 sabres, 925 rifles.

#### AFGHANS.

5,000 Kohistanis north of Mir Karez.

1,500 to 2,000 Kohistanis west of Mir Karez.

10,000 tribesmen at Argandeh, sixteen miles west of Sherpur.

3,500 Logaris on left bank of Kabul river between Baker and Sherpur.

See, Strategical Map, No. 11.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### The Disaster of the 11th of December, 1879

EARLY on the morning of the 11th of December, Captain Stewart-Mackenzie's squadron of the 9th Lancers, accompanied by Colonel R. S. Cleland commanding the regiment, left Sherpur and, three miles from cantonments, was overtaken by Brigadier-General Massy and his staff. Roberts himself was to ride out later in the day, to witness the defeat which the combined forces of Macpherson and Baker were about to inflict on the followers of the Mullah. On arriving at Aushar Massy despatched Captain J. J. S. Chisholme, with a troop of the 9th Lancers, to open communication with Macpherson,<sup>1</sup> whilst he, with four guns and 214 sabres, advanced cautiously across the Chardeh Valley in a south-westerly direction, with the intention of striking the Ghazni road near the village of Killa Kazi. The little force had ridden about three miles and was within a mile of the point for which it was making, when Captain Bloomfield Gough, the officer in command of the advanced guard, reported that he had come in sight of a considerable body of tribesmen on the slopes on either side of the Ghazni road. Almost immediately hills and plain were swarming with armed men, and Massy discovered to his astonishment that he was in the presence of Mahomed Jan's entire army. That astute leader, who, from his central position at Argandeh, had been watching the movements of the various British forces sent out to destroy him

<sup>1</sup> Chisholme got through, but was unable to get back.—H. B. H.



and his followers, had come to the conclusion that they were sufficiently far removed from each other and from their base to make it safe for him to venture an attack upon Sherpur, and, starting out even earlier than Massy, had secretly taken up a position across the Ghazni road, within nine miles of the British cantonment.

At a glance Massy grasped the whole situation, and understood that, for the moment, the safety of Roberts's entire force lay with him and his guns. To charge the enormous masses of armed men opposed to him with a handful of cavalry, would have been useless, even had the ground been smooth and open, instead of rough and much cut up by streams and ditches; yet a hasty retreat would expose Macpherson's Brigade to attack by overwhelming numbers whilst entangled amongst the hills, and result in the capture of Sherpur; for how should its weakened garrison defend a half-fortified enclosure of great extent against ten thousand men, flushed with victory and relieved of all anxiety as to their flanks and rear? To delay the enemy's advance to the last possible moment, was the one thing that might yet avert disaster by giving timely warning to Macpherson—if only the sound of the firing should reach his ears—to hurry to the spot where his presence was so urgently needed.

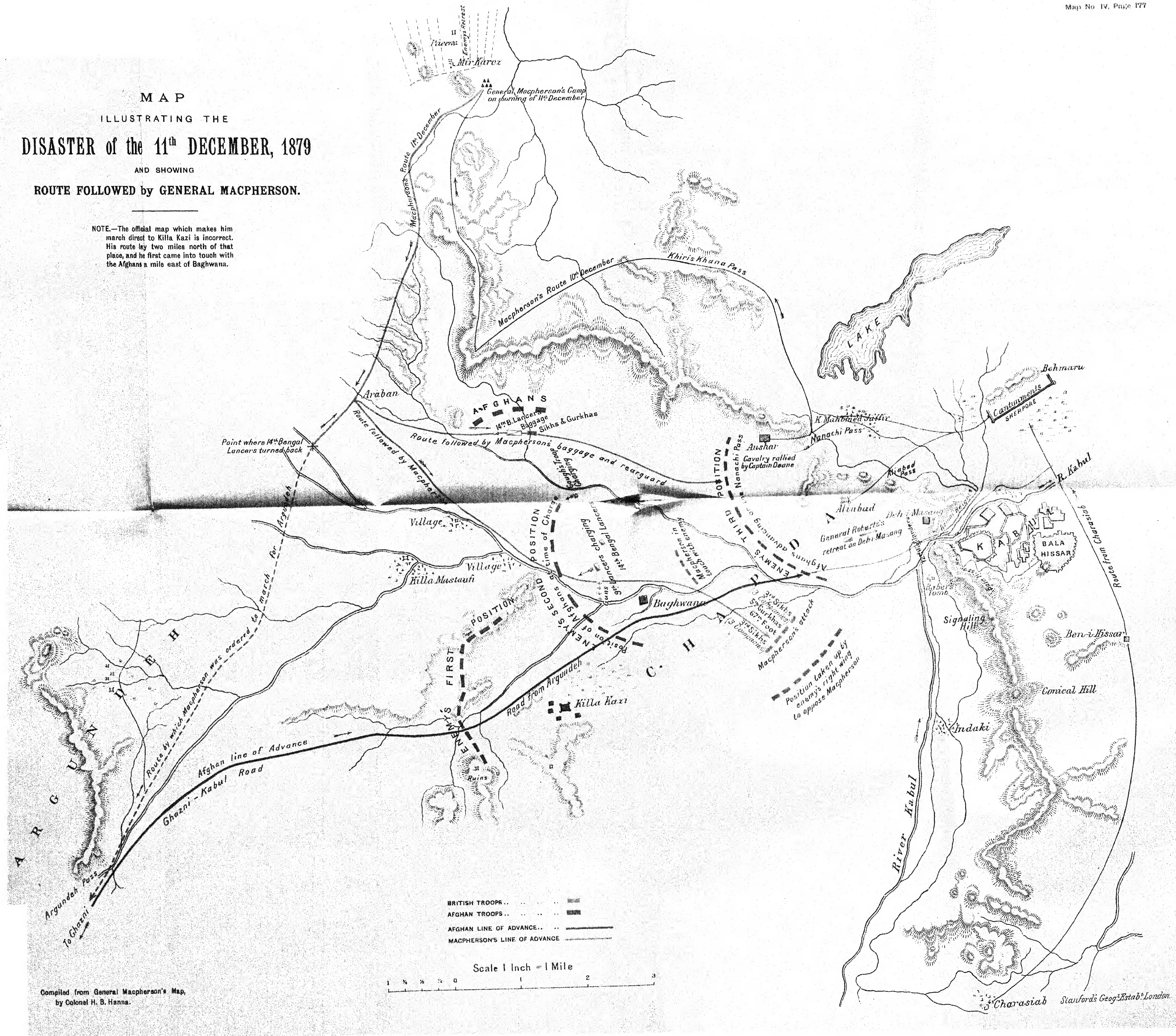
For Massy to see the right thing to be done, was to do it, and hardly had the order to keep the enemy back been given to Major Smyth-Windham before the guns came into action, firing with such precision at a range of two thousand nine hundred yards that, for a time, the enemy's progress was checked.<sup>1</sup> Not for long, however; soon, with a frontage of nearly two miles, the whole Afghan army, displaying thirty to forty standards, red, white, and green, and admirably led by numerous horsemen, again began moving forward, in crescent-shaped formation, evidently bent on outflanking the British and cutting them off from Sherpur. In the hope of intimidating his

<sup>1</sup> Massy's Despatch, dated 20th December, 1879.



MAP  
ILLUSTRATING THE  
DISASTER of the 11<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 1879  
AND SHOWING  
ROUTE FOLLOWED by GENERAL MACPHERSON.

NOTE.—The official map which makes him march direct to Killa Kazi is incorrect. His route lay two miles north of that place, and he first came into touch with the Afghans a mile east of Baghwana.







## DISASTER OF ELEVENTH OF DECEMBER 177

assailants by a more searching fire, Massy moved the guns nearer to Killa Kazi and brought them into action, first at two thousand five hundred, then at two thousand yards, but no good resulted from this step. Where the shells burst, the Afghans were thrown into momentary confusion, but the enveloping movement went steadily forward, and to extricate his men from the net that threatened to close upon them, Massy saw himself forced to fall sharply back and take up a fourth position on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Kabul River, only seventeen hundred yards in advance of the Afghans, whose bullets now began to fall around the guns. Gough, who, with his troop of Lancers, had been hovering on the enemy's left flank, now dashed upon the leading horsemen, but though he killed a number and captured a standard, he failed to arrest the advance of the main body. Again and again, the guns fell back, firing at ever shorter range; for the enemy, following in quick, fierce rushes, with loud shouts of Allah! Bismullah! drew nearer with every rush.<sup>1</sup> As a last desperate expedient, Massy dismounted thirty men of the 9th Lancers to cover the retirement of the guns; but, armed only with carbines, their fire made no impression on the dense masses surging around them; and it was then, just when it had become apparent that no courage, no devotion could hinder the two wings of Mahomed Jan's army from overlapping both flanks of the retiring force,<sup>2</sup> that Sir Frederick Roberts and Sir Michael Kennedy appeared upon the scene.

The British commander and his guest, with their respective staffs, had left Sherpur at 10 a.m., starting in high spirits to witness the final act of the drama, the programme of which had been drawn up three days before. At first they rode slowly, for as Argandeh, where the Afghans were to be trapped, was sixteen miles off, both

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Wolseley's Diary. This officer, who belonged to the Yeomanry, was on the field as a spectator, but later on was attached to the 9th Lancers for duty.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Massy's Despatch.

Macpherson and Baker had a long way to march before they would come into action, and there was no need to hurry ; but, on emerging from the Nanachi Pass, their ears were greeted by the boom of artillery and the incessant crackle of innumerable muskets, unexpected sounds which made them put spurs to their horses and dash forward with foreboding hearts, soon to be brought to a standstill by a spectacle which might well daunt the bravest. There, in front of them, pressing forward in battle array, with waving banners and triumphant shouts, was the Afghan army, supposed to be supinely awaiting destruction at Argandeh, and, flying before them, the Horse Artillery guns and the Cavalry, still intact, but powerless to check the advance of thousands of men sweeping towards the Nanachi Pass, a goal they must never be allowed to reach, for beyond it lay Sherpur, with all its treasures of grain, of fodder, of fuel. In an instant Roberts had sent off a written order to Hugh Gough, whom he had left in command of cantonments, instructing him to secure the pass,<sup>1</sup> and a verbal message to Massy bidding him charge the enemy and delay, at least, if he could not arrest, his advance.<sup>2</sup> It was generally believed at the time that the cavalry were sacrificed to save the guns, but this was not the case ; incidentally, there was the hope that the guns would profit by the sacrifice, but it was made for Sherpur, the loss of which would have meant the annihilation of all Roberts's scattered forces, left with no rallying point and no supplies. Whether the cavalry understood the urgency of the need which sent them to destruction, or not, they accepted the part assigned to them with noble alacrity. Splendidly led by Colonel Cleland, a squadron of the 9th Lancers, supported by the 14th Bengal Lancers, rode straight into the seething, raging sea of armed men, whilst Gough's troop of the former regiment sought to

<sup>1</sup> " About this juncture, General Roberts, seeing that the enemy were working towards the Nanachi Kotal, sent me a written order to secure the Kotal at once." (" Old Memories," by Sir H. Gough. *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 396.)

<sup>2</sup> Massy's Despatch.

## DISASTER OF ELEVENTH OF DECEMBER 179

confuse the enemy by a flank attack. Received with a terrific discharge of musketry, clouds of dust and smoke quickly hid the devoted band from the eyes of the anxious spectators; then, out of those clouds, horses were seen to come galloping back, some riderless, some with riders swaying in their saddles. Among the wounded were the gallant Cleland, his bridle arm badly sabred, a bullet in his stomach, and young Hearsey, shot through the lungs, who fell to the ground dead, as his horse stopped short. The charge had done nothing to improve the general situation, and unfortunately, during its progress, Roberts stopped the retirement of two of the guns to cover the falling back of the cavalry,<sup>1</sup> and afterwards changed the line of retreat of all four, so that they were no longer moving towards the pass, in which direction only was there any chance of escape, but towards the city, over unknown ground, which proved so difficult that soon one had to be spiked and left lying in the ditch into which it had fallen.<sup>2</sup> The remaining three, by Roberts's orders, now made for the village of Baghwana,<sup>3</sup> a strong position if held in force, for, surrounded by ditches, it was difficult of access, but for a handful of cavalry and for guns running short of ammunition, nothing better than a death-trap. A very few moments sufficed to make this clear, so, after one or two futile discharges, the guns made their way between the houses to the eastern side of the village, only to find their further progress barred by a broad, deep water-channel. Whilst, in feverish haste, the gunners were searching for a passage across this formidable obstacle, Roberts, seeing their desperate plight and hoping against hope that even yet the guns might be saved, directed Captain Stewart-Mackenzie,

<sup>1</sup> Massy's Despatch; see, also, *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> "The line of retreat which the circumstances indicated was different from that by which Massy had advanced and its features were unknown to him." (Letter of *Times'* Correspondent, dated January 4th, 1880.)

<sup>3</sup> "I now ordered Smyth-Windham to make for the village of Baghwana with his three remaining guns, as the only chance left of saving them." (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 273.)



on whom the command of the 9th Lancers had devolved, to make a second charge.<sup>1</sup> The order was obeyed, but disheartened men, mounted on jaded horses, with hardly an officer left to lead them, could make no impression on the Afghans, and as Smyth-Windham's efforts to get the guns across the ditch had ended in their falling into it, and there was no time to drag them out again, there was nothing left to do but to order the artillerymen to spike them where they lay, cut the traces of the horses, and save themselves as best they could.<sup>2</sup> A terrible scene followed. Some of the cavalry had fallen back into Baghwana, others had followed Roberts and a few members of his staff round its southern wall; but one and all had to face the obstacle which had proved fatal to the guns. Most of those in the open got safely over; some, well-mounted, cleared the channel at a bound; others fell into it and had great difficulty in gaining a footing on the further side; a few were shot down in the very act of leaping;<sup>3</sup> but those in the village, jammed together in the narrow street, with Mahomed Jan's men swarming at their heels, and the villagers firing down upon them from the roofs of the houses, in their frantic haste pushed each other into the water, where, struggling and floundering, they destroyed their own and their comrades' chances of escape. There were noble exceptions to this panic spirit. Here and there a man saved his friend, or stood by him to the death. Sir Charles Wolseley got Cleland into a dhoolie; Lieutenant E. Hardy of the Horse Artillery refused to

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> "I quite approved of Major Windham's spiking and leaving his guns, as, in my opinion, to have remained with them longer with the enemy rapidly enveloping him, would have only sacrificed the lives of all under his command." (Report of the action of the 11th of December by Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Gordon, Commanding Royal Artillery, Kabul Field Force, dated 26th December, 1879.)

<sup>3</sup> "Just as I neared it (the ditch) a sowar of the 14th Bengal Cavalry passed me and jumped just in front of me; as he landed he was shot dead and fell back right across me; for a moment I thought I must be in the watercourse, but with a scramble my pony just got over." (Sir Charles Wolseley's Diary.)

## DISASTER OF ELEVENTH OF DECEMBER 181

leave a wounded subaltern, young Forbes of the 14th Bengal Lancers, who had been confided to his care, and the two died together. The Rev. J. W. Adams, Military Chaplain to the Force, pulled no less than three men out of the watercourse, two of them when the enemy were within a few yards of him, and would have paid for his devotion with his life, if a Staff Officer, dashing by, had not seen his danger and taken him up behind him on his horse.<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant C. J. W. Trower and Lieutenant E. B. M'Innes of the 9th Lancers, also distinguished themselves by their gallantry. Those who got clear of the village and over the ditch fled in all directions; some towards the Nanachi Pass; some over the Aliabad Kotal; but the majority followed Sir F. Roberts towards the Deh-i-Masang Gorge, their retreat steadily covered by Captain J. P. C. Neville's Squadron of the 14th Bengal Lancers and by a few dismounted men of the 9th Lancers, rallied by Gough, the only officer of that regiment not *hors-de-combat*. Those who failed to get over the watercourse were killed by the Afghans, who, brandishing their weapons and howling like wolves closing on their prey, swept through the village, murdering the wounded, and stripping and mutilating the dead.

Fatal as were the doings in this part of the field to the defeated, they were but an episode so far as the victors were concerned. Only a portion of their host had taken part in them, the main body the while relentlessly pressing forward towards the Nanachi Pass. They had come within a thousand yards of it when, suddenly, their advance stopped, and after a short interval of hesitation and confusion, their left wing swung round and their whole force headed towards the Deh-i-Masang Gorge.<sup>2</sup> For some reason, unknown to the anxious spectators of the change, Mahomed Jan had abandoned his plan of rushing Sherpur and was now intent on seizing the Sher

<sup>1</sup> Adams afterwards received the Victoria Cross.—H. B. II.

<sup>2</sup> "Enemy came on to within 1,000 yards, then turned east towards the city." (Macgregor, Vol. II. p. 161.)

Darwaza Heights and occupying Kabul. For a moment men breathed more freely, but Roberts knew that Sherpur was only respited, not saved, for, in the scattered state of his forces, an advance on cantonments through the city was hardly less to be dreaded than an immediate and direct attack, and, knowing this, he determined that into the city they should not enter, if courage and skill could keep them out. Its Governor, General Hills, who had just joined him, he despatched to Hugh Gough with a verbal message countermanding the previous order to occupy the Nanachi Pass, and directing him to seize the Deh-i-Masang Gorge with a wing of the 72nd Highlanders.<sup>1</sup> Hills galloped away with the message, and Roberts, following more slowly, soon found himself close to Wali Mahomed's camp, pitched there a few days earlier when that Prince was expecting to be sent as Governor to Turkestan. Here he was met by a group of terrified Afghans—Wali Mahomed himself, Daud Shah, and other Sirdars—all men who, having given aid to the enemies of their country, now found themselves in danger of a traitor's doom. If they were looking for words of sympathy and encouragement from the British General, their disappointment must have been keen; oppressed with care and enraged at the failure of his plans, Roberts overwhelmed the unfortunate men with reproaches for having misled him with false information. In vain they pleaded that they themselves had been ill-informed;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Old Memories," by Sir H. Gough. *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 396.

In his Despatch of the 23rd January, 1880, Roberts omitted to mention the order to Gough to secure the Nanachi Pass, and claimed to have sent the order to hold the Deh-i-Masang Gorge "immediately on reaching the ground," whereas it was really sent after the movements of Macpherson had brought about a change in the enemy's line of advance.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> "It was difficult to believe that this was the case, and I was unwillingly forced to the conclusion that not a single Afghan could be trusted however profuse he might be in his assurances of fidelity, and that we must depend entirely on our own resources for intelligence," (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II, p. 279.)

## DISASTER OF ELEVENTH OF DECEMBER 183

he was not to be appeased, and the interview left them more anxious and depressed than ever, for it looked as if they would have to pay the penalty of treason whichever side got the better of the other.

The change in Mahomed Jan's tactics, which undoubtedly saved Sherpur, was due to no sudden caprice, but to the fact that Macpherson, issuing unexpectedly from the hills, had fallen upon the Afghan rear and thrown it into hopeless disorder. Leaving Mir Karez at 7.50 a.m. he re-crossed the Surkh Kotal to the west of the ravine up which he had led his troops the previous day, and once on its southern side, he saw that many tribesmen, singly or in groups were

### ERRATUM

For "west" read *east* at page 183, sixth line from the bottom.

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so sending off his orderly officer, Captain A. D. Macgregor, to recall the Lancers, and Captain G. W. Martin to carry to Colonel Gordon, whom he believed to be still in command of the cavalry and guns, the order to hold the enemy in check, and the assurance that he was coming on as fast as infantry could travel, Macpherson turned from the path leading to Argandeh and struck into a track which curves away to the south-east and strikes the Ghazni road a mile to the west of Baghwana. Placing his baggage in charge of six companies of Sikhs and Gurkhas under Major Griffiths, with orders to make their way back to Sherpur, he gave the remainder of his troops the word to step out; and never was order more willingly obeyed, for every man felt that the lives of his comrades and the safety of Sherpur depended

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## DISASTER OF ELEVENTH OF DECEMBER 183

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The change in Mahomed Jan's tactics, which undoubtedly saved Sherpur, was due to no sudden caprice, but to the fact that Macpherson, issuing unexpectedly from the hills, had fallen upon the Afghan rear and thrown it into hopeless disorder. Leaving Mir Karez at 7.50 a.m. he re-crossed the Surkh Kotal to the west of the ravine up which he had led his troops the previous day, and once on its southern side, he saw that many tribesmen, singly or in groups, were moving towards the hills east of Argandeh, whilst others were coming over the Argandeh Pass. Sending forward Lieutenant-Colonel T. G. Ross with the squadron of the 14th Bengal Lancers to reconnoitre, he was following with the main body when, through a gap in the hills on his left, near the village of Araban, he caught the sound of Horse Artillery guns and instantly understood the message they were intended to convey. There could be no question now of big combined movements; the little force that he had left at Aushar was evidently in sore straits and his duty was to go to its assistance; so sending off his orderly officer, Captain A. D. Macgregor, to recall the Lancers, and Captain G. W. Martin to carry to Colonel Gordon, whom he believed to be still in command of the cavalry and guns, the order to hold the enemy in check, and the assurance that he was coming on as fast as infantry could travel, Macpherson turned from the path leading to Argandeh and struck into a track which curves away to the south-east and strikes the Ghazni road a mile to the west of Baghwana. Placing his baggage in charge of six companies of Sikhs and Gurkhas under Major Griffiths, with orders to make their way back to Sherpur, he gave the remainder of his troops the word to step out; and never was order more willingly obeyed, for every man felt that the lives of his comrades and the safety of Sherpur depended

upon his speed, especially after Lieutenant Neville Chamberlain, who had gone on ahead to reconnoitre, returned with the report that he had seen the cavalry and guns engaged with an enormous body of Afghans. Many tribesmen, in hostile attitude, soon showed themselves on the British right, but Macpherson, who, to use his own words, "had no time to waste on anything but the main body of the enemy," pressed forward without a pause till the Chardeh Valley, swarming with the followers of the despised Mullah, came into view. To give notice to Massy that help was at hand, he now ordered Captain Morgan to open fire with the mountain guns; but quick as had been the British movements, the men for whom that signal was intended, had been swept away, out of sight and hearing, an hour before, and when, at 12.30 p.m., Macpherson's infantry deployed, it was with the rear of Mahomed Jan's force that it had to deal, and of this it made very short work. Believing Macpherson's Brigade to be marching on Argandeh, the Afghans were unprepared for its sudden irruption into the Chardeh Valley, and even mistook the head of the column for Kohistanis coming to their assistance.<sup>1</sup> The fire of the guns showed them their mistake, and one large body of tribesmen "in regular line formation with their right resting on a fort close to the high-road" prepared to make a stand. Their courage failed them, however, at the decisive moment; and, before the attack could be made, they broke and fled, some, towards the Emperor Baber's tomb on the right bank of the Kabul River, pursued by the 3rd Sikhs; others, towards Indaki, with the 67th Foot on their heels. Their dispersal was so complete that Macpherson could write in his despatch that his troops had "almost boxed the compass," and driven, he might say "hunted the enemy in all directions, so that by 2 o'clock the mountains, crowded with black specks, looked like ant-hills, and later on, from the commanding

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's Supplementary Despatch, dated 4th January, 1880.

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position of Killa Kazi, not an Afghan could be seen on the Chardeh plain." <sup>1</sup>

In that commanding position, Macpherson reassembled his troops at 3.30 p.m., and there he decided to bivouack for the night to be ready to support Baker.

Meanwhile, in another part of the big battle-field the disaster of the morning was being partially retrieved. Captain T. Deane, one of the officers who had come up to Kabul with Sir Michael Kennedy, had headed off the troopers who had fled towards the Nanachi Pass, and hardly had he succeeded in stopping and rallying them than he was joined by Colonel Macgregor, Major A. Badcock, Mr. H. M. Durand, Lieutenant A. F. Liddell, and the bearer of Macpherson's message to Colonel Gordon, Captain G. W. Martin. Looking towards Baghwana, these officers could see that the village and the country lying between it and them, were comparatively speaking free from the enemy, and Macgregor instantly made up his mind to recover the guns. The bold scheme was crowned with complete success. Under Macgregor's inspiring leadership, the panic-stricken fugitives of a few minutes before unhesitatingly retraced their steps, and, reinforced by some men of Macpherson's baggage guard, that they chanced to come across, reached the guns, which on the arrival of General Massy with a squadron of the 9th Lancers, and one of the 14th Bengal Lancers sent from cantonments,<sup>2</sup> were dragged out of the water and brought safe into Sherpur. By extracting the spikes and replacing by duplicates the moveable parts of which they had been stripped, they were soon made serviceable again,<sup>3</sup> and the garrison, in the anxious days which followed, had good reason to rejoice in their recovery.

Before nightfall, Macpherson's baggage train also got back to Sherpur; not without difficulty, however. The hills through which

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's Despatch, dated 27th December, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Massy's Despatch.

<sup>3</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon's Report.

it had made its way were alive with tribesmen, hungry for spoil, and but for the strength of its original escort, and the additional protection afforded it by the squadron of 14th Bengal Lancers recalled by Captain Macgregor, many of the laden mules would certainly have been cut off and driven away. So persistent and so bold were the Afghans that, in the end, it was found needful to resort to a bayonet charge, which, gallantly led by Captain J. Cook, 5th Gurkhas, and Lieutenant W. Cook, 3rd Sikhs, taught them to keep their distance. Unfortunately, both brothers were wounded in the fight.

If the 11th of December was a day of disaster for Massy and a day of success for Macpherson, for Hugh Gough it was one of intense anxiety. Left in command of an immense cantonment, with only the 72nd Highlanders, a wing of the Pioneers, three squadrons of cavalry, and a few guns to defend it, he had been ordered by Roberts to guard against the approach of an enemy from Kohistan, and had made his dispositions on the assumption that it was from the North only that danger need be expected; but about an hour and a half after the General's departure, he began to receive messages from Lieutenant E. E. Robertson, the officer in charge of a signalling party stationed on the Sher Darwaza Heights, which, little by little, opened his eyes to peril of a far more acute nature, threatening Sherpur from the west. From his lofty post of observation, Robertson overlooked the Chardeh Valley, saw all that went on there, and in brief sentences reported each incident as it occurred—the sudden appearance of Mahomed Jan's army on the hills above Killa Kazi, the advance of Massy's force, the coming into action of the guns, the charge of the Cavalry, the great fight that followed. With ever-growing uneasiness Gough received each instalment of the tale, but when it came to the point of "I see our cavalry retiring; the enemy is advancing;" he knew that Sherpur would be that enemy's goal, the Nanachi Pass, his line of advance, and forthwith made every arrangement for the defence of the place which the miserably inadequate force at his

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disposal would permit.<sup>1</sup> He posted his artillery so as to command the road leading to the Pass ; he laid down wire entanglement at the weakest points ; he telegraphed to Colonel Jenkins, commanding the Corps of Guides, at Seh Baba to march instantly to his assistance ; so far as was possible, he assigned to every man his post, and finally took up his stand on the top of the western gateway to watch for the first appearance of the victorious Afghans, determined to defend Sherpur to the death. Before long he received Roberts's written order to occupy the Nanachi Pass ; but before he could make arrangements to execute it, Robertson, who, with great courage, still maintained his position on the Heights above the city, signalled news that released him from the necessity of obeying it—the Afghan army had changed front and was no longer advancing on Sherpur. The relief was great,<sup>2</sup> for Gough had not a man to spare, and any force that he might have sent to defend the Pass would have been swept away by the main body of the victorious Afghan host, or cut off by the tribesmen swarming over the hills or across the Aliabad Kotal ; but he had little time for congratulating himself on dangers escaped, so urgent were those that still confronted him. Soon a line of fugitives came into sight, followed by Major Smyth-Windham and the artillery teams, and, last of all, by Sir Charles Wolseley and poor Cleland, no longer in a dhoolie—that had had to be abandoned—but on horseback, held up in his saddle by two wounded men of the 9th Lancers. The arrival of these survivors of Massy's ill-starred force, bringing with them wild reports of the enemy's strength and the speed with which they were rushing on, threw the camp-followers and

<sup>1</sup> Sir Hugh Gough's "Old Memories," *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 395. Hensman, at page 197 of his book, says that the men available for duty were "less than a thousand."

<sup>2</sup> "It was a great relief to find they were not advancing direct on us by the Nanachi Kotal as they originally intended—for, honestly speaking, I think we should have had a tough job to stop them," ("Old Memories," *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 396.)



even the troops in cantonments into such a state of alarm that, if Gough had been a man of less experience and resolution, a panic would have ensued.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion that he should evacuate Sherpur, he received with indignant scorn, and silencing all clamour and idle talk, went steadily about the business of succouring the wounded and making such preparations to send out troops to the assistance of Roberts that, when Hills galloped in with the message substituting an order to occupy the Deh-i-Masang Gorge for that which had bidden him secure the Nanachi Pass, he was able to execute it without a moment's delay. Two hundred Highlanders, led by Colonel Brownlow, doubled out of Sherpur, and reached the defile just in time to forestall the Afghans in the possession of the village at its further end.<sup>2</sup> Hurrying his men on to the roofs of the houses, Brownlow poured volley after volley into Mahomed Jan's long deep line, till that General, uncertain as to the strength of his new opponents and still pressed in rear by Macpherson's Brigade, took ground to his right; the huge column—that was the formation his followers had now assumed—heading towards Indaki, and occupying the Takht-i-Shah, the lofty hill which commanded the Sher Darwaza Heights and threatened the Upper Bala Hissar.

There was nothing reassuring in the situation on which the sun

<sup>1</sup> "Smyth-Windham and his artillerymen and the few straggling Lancers had carried the bad news in before us, and the feeling in camp almost amounted to a panic, and everyone seemed to expect the enemy to appear in sight in overwhelming force." (Sir Charles Wolseley's Diary.)

Lieutenant C. G. Robertson, who was in charge of General Macpherson's transport on the 11th December, says that on his arrival in Cantonments he found "every sign of an unwonted excitement," and when he was at last admitted through a barricaded gateway he was "assailed by volleys of questions from groups of men and officers, some cheery, chaffing, and confident, others veritably despondent and anxious." (*Kuram, Kabul, and Kandahar*, pp. 122, 123.)

<sup>2</sup> "The enemy streamed down upon the village . . . but Colonel Brownlow's admirable disposition of his handful of Highlanders soon checked the rush." (Hensman, p. 195.)

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went down that evening, but the presence of mind and clear insight displayed by Roberts in sending for the Highlanders the moment he perceived the change in the enemy's plans, had, at least, frustrated Mahomed Jan's hope of obtaining immediate possession of Kabul; a gain of great value at a time when Sherpur was denuded of three-fourths of its defenders, and Baker's and Macpherson's Brigades were both *en l'air*. The latter force, however, was not suffered to pass the night isolated at Killa Kazi. As soon as he felt certain that the Chardeh Valley was clear of the enemy, Roberts despatched his Orderly Officer, Lieutenant J. Sherston, to search for Macpherson, of whose whereabouts he was still ignorant, and to direct him, when found, to fall back on Deh-i-Masang. Sherston had no difficulty in discovering the Brigade, and, by 7 o'clock, Macpherson had taken up the position assigned to him; and his troops, with the exception of two companies of the 5th Gurkhas, whom he was able to spare to Gough, were hard at work entrenching themselves at the mouth of the gorge, "thus further securing the approach to the city."<sup>1</sup> Then having done all that knowledge and prudence could suggest to ensure the safety of his forces, inside and outside cantonments, Roberts returned to Sherpur, and about midnight, to the great relief of the garrison, the Guides arrived, having made a forced march of thirty miles.<sup>2</sup>

The troops in cantonments and those at the mouth of the Deh-i-Masang Gorge, spent a quiet night; not so, the signalling party on the Sher Darwaza Heights, and it was well that Gough had sent a company of the 72nd and one of the 67th under Captain R. E. C. Jarvis to strengthen the post; for, but for these reinforcements and the rough, but strong sangar erected by Robertson, it would certainly

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> "At 7 o'clock we heard that he (Colonel Jenkins) was at But Khak, and as I am writing (at midnight) his corps is marching in, over 700 strong—200 more will arrive to-morrow with the baggage." (Hensman, p. 198.)

have been lost before morning. Between 6 and 7 p.m. a number of Afghans got to the rear of the sangar, and Jarvis, seeing himself surrounded, drew in his outlying pickets and kept all his two hundred and fifteen men under arms. Again and again, the tribesmen advanced to the assault, and, again and again, British steadiness proved more than a match for Afghan impetuosity. The hillsides were lit up by the continuous fire of assailants and assailed, and by that light many anxious eyes watched from Sherpur the progress of the struggle. It was after 11 p.m. when the last attack was made. In the lull that had preceded it, a few Afghans had crept close up to the breastwork, and, hidden by the darkness, hurled taunts and threats at the men inside ; but of these no notice was taken, nor yet of the storm of musketry under cover of which the assault was to be delivered. Silent and watchful, Jarvis's men reserved their fire till the enemy was within forty yards of the sangar ; then, at the word of command, they poured such deadly volleys into the dimly seen masses rushing forward to overwhelm them, that the tribesmen lost heart and beat a hasty retreat down the hillsides. The bodies of twelve Afghans were found next day close to the sangar, but many dead and wounded must have been carried away ; whereas, thanks to the strength of Robertson's improvised breastwork and the steadiness of its defenders, Jarvis lost not a single man killed and only ten wounded.

The Casualties on the 11th December were as follows :—

Brigadier-General Dunham Massy's Brigade :—

*Killed.*

Lieutenant E. Hardy, F-A Royal Horse Artillery.  
Lieutenant C. J. R. Hearsey, 9th Lancers.  
2nd Lieutenant W. P. Ricardo, 9th Lancers.  
Lieutenant O. Forbes, 14th Bengal Lancers.  
Sixteen men, 9th Lancers.  
Seven men, 14th Bengal Lancers.

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## *Wounded.*

Lieutenant-Colonel R. S. Cleland, 9th Lancers.  
 Captain J. A. H. Stewart-Mackenzie, 9th Lancers.  
 One man, F-A Royal Horse Artillery.  
 Nineteen men, 9th Lancers.  
 Three men, 14th Bengal Lancers.

## Brigadier-General Macpherson's Brigade :—

### *Killed.*

One man, 3rd Sikhs.  
 One man, 5th Gurkhas.

### *Wounded.*

Captain J. Cook, V.C., 5th Gurkhas.  
 Lieutenant W. Cook, 3rd Sikhs.  
 A Native Officer, 3rd Sikhs.  
 Two men, 3rd Sikhs.  
 Two men, 5th Gurkhas.

## Captain R. E. C. Jarvis's Picket :—

### *Wounded.*

One man, 67th Foot.  
 Nine men, 72nd Highlanders.

## TOTAL CASUALTIES.

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Men.</i>	<i>Horses</i>
Killed . . . . .	4	25	51
Wounded . . . . .	5	37	16
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	9	62	67

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. "Reviewing the incidents of the 11th of December, as I have frequently done since, with all the concomitant circumstances deeply impressed on my memory, I have failed to

discover that any disposition of my force different from that I made could have had better results, or that what did occur could have been averted by greater forethought or more careful calculation on my part." <sup>1</sup>

If this retrospective verdict of acquittal pronounced by Lord Roberts on himself, had been intended to apply solely to the disposition made by him after his arrival in the Chardeh Valley on the 11th of December, no one would be likely to dispute it—the situation he found there was so bad that no other disposition of his force could have been more successful than that made by him—but the sentence that follows the one quoted above shows that he intended it to cover the whole of the strategy of which this hopeless situation was the outcome. "Two deviations from my programme (which probably at the time appeared unimportant to the Commanders in question) were the principal factors in bringing about the unfortunate occurrences of that day. Had Macpherson marched at 7 a.m. instead of at 8, and had Massy followed the route I had arranged for him to take, Mahomed Jan must have fallen into the trap I had prepared for him."

The exact contrary of the three assertions made in this latter extract is true.

(1) Had Macpherson marched at 7 a.m. instead of at 8, he would have passed the gap in the hills, through which alone the sound of the guns could reach him, before Massy came into action, and would have arrived at Argandeh to find that the whole of Mahomed Jan's army was between him and Kabul, too far on its way to Sherpur for him to be able to exercise any influence on its movements.

(2) Had Massy followed the route arranged for him, *i.e.* had he moved round two sides of a parallelogram, instead of diagonally across it, he would have sighted the enemy later than he did, and the guns summoning Macpherson to the Chardeh Valley, would have been fired in vain.

<sup>1</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 281.



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(3) Mahomed Jan, well informed as to the movements of the British forces, was never in a trap. Unencumbered by transport, and with an army consisting of the most mobile military elements in the world, he was all along free to accept battle or to disperse his followers with a view to their reassembling a day or two later, as might seem best to him; and when he saw that the right moment had come to take the offensive, he simply walked out of the position in which he was expected to await Baker's and Macpherson's convenience, and brought all Roberts's "careful calculation" to nought.

The attempt to shift the blame for the inevitable failure of a plan which violated the fundamental principles of the art of war, on to the shoulders of a subordinate, was not made for the first time in the pages of Lord Roberts's Autobiography. In his despatch regarding the loss of the guns, he gave so misleading an account of Massy's proceedings as to result in that officer's being severely censured and removed from his command. Fortunately, the Duke of Cambridge, the then Commander-in-Chief, whose strong sense of justice was so often exercised in righting individual wrongs, was not deceived as to the quarter to which blame really attached, and Maszy was soon reappointed to a Brigade.

No direct attempt to fix responsibility for the catastrophe on Macpherson was made at the time, but telegrams grossly misrepresenting the part played by him on the 10th and the 11th of December quickly appeared in the Indian and English newspapers. The real truth as to that part is contained in Sir Hugh Gough's frank admission that the change in the direction of the enemy's advance—a change which saved Sherpur—"was due to the sudden appearance on the scene of Macpherson and his Brigade, who had marched over the hills from Kohistan, and arrived just in the nick of time to attack them (the Afghans) in rear;"<sup>1</sup> and no one who carefully studies the

<sup>1</sup> "Old Memories," *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 396.

sequence of events around Kabul from the 8th to the 11th of December, can fail to agree with Gough that "he (Roberts) was fortunate in having so reliable a Brigadier as Herbert Macpherson, who, seeing the difficulties of the situation, was able to move his troops so effectually to his assistance."<sup>1</sup> How Macpherson, one of the most modest of men, regarded his "deviation" from Roberts's programme, may be learned from the following extract from his diary, dated Kabul, January 7th, 1880:—" . . . paid me a long visit some days ago, and as he was very anxious to know what my Force had done, I let him have a copy of my despatch to read—he has not yet returned it. In sending him the copy, I said in my note that 'I claim by my Flank March, in battle of the 11th December, to have saved the position here entirely.' If I had done as I was ordered, gone to Argandeh, I should have been embroiled with the enemy there in a very difficult country, and could not have rescued Sherpur from Mahomed Jan and his hosts—estimated, I see, at 30,000—who would have been between me and Kabul. By my flank march, which I decided on in an instant, I cut in between half his army and Kabul, and actually pierced his centre, and after driving off from the plain of Chardeh the army that was in possession of our Horse Artillery guns, and was pursuing Roberts and the Cavalry into Kabul, I turned round and scattered the other half that was coming on. I had only 900 *Infantry and 2 Mountain guns*, and why it was that we were not overwhelmed, I say, was our never hesitating to attack at once everything that attempted to oppose us. If there had been any hesitation on our side, we should have been destroyed. After all this, it is pleasant to read in the *Bombay Gazette* and *Civil and Military* 'General Macpherson's check and reverse'!! . . . and the *Pioneer* gives a false colouring to my action on the 11th, as it says that having been drawn into an engagement with the Kohistanis, I was unable to turn on Mahomed Jan! This is just

<sup>1</sup> "Old Memories," *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 397.

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what I was able to do :—having given the Kohistanis a good beating and prevented their junction with Mahomed Jan, I was quite free to attack Mahomed Jan, and my report shows how that was done. It seems like a blessing of Providence that I did not march at 7 a.m. ; had I done so we should have been committed with the enemy on the road to Argandeh and unable to rescue Kabul from his grip.”

OBSERVATION II. In a mountainous country, Artillery and Cavalry should be invariably supported by Infantry. Even Cavalry when acting alone should have an Infantry support handy on which to fall back. Had an infantry regiment been allotted to Massy's Force on the 11th of December, it is improbable that his guns would have been captured ; and that there was no regiment to spare to him, is in itself strong condemnation of strategy, which sought to do with three thousand men what would have been risky and difficult of accomplishment for three times that number.

OBSERVATION III. The first of the two cavalry charges ordered by Sir F. Roberts was delivered with great spirit and gallantry, and when the confusion which reigned among the 9th Lancers on emerging from a sea of enemies with hardly an officer left to rally them, is taken into account, the fact that, a little later, they charged a second time speaks volumes for their courage and discipline. The conduct of the Squadron of the 14th Bengal Lancers, commanded by Captain J. P. C. Neville, which on both occasions followed in support, also deserves high praise. Though not pitted against the full strength of the enemy, it took its share in the terrible risks run and, after each charge, re-formed with wonderful steadiness to cover the retreat of its British comrades. Whether either charge was justified by a reasonable expectation of its serving to delay the Afghan advance is questionable ; but the situation was desperate, and there was no other measure that could have been resorted to.

## CHAPTER XIX

### March of Baker's Brigade

OPERATIONS ROUND KABUL ON THE 12TH AND 13TH OF DECEMBER, 1879

MANY times during the events narrated in the foregoing chapter had Sir F. Roberts tried to open communication with Baker ; but neither by heliograph, nor by messenger, was it found possible to reach him, and the General and his Brigadier had each to spend the night of the 11th of December in ignorance of all that had befallen the other.

Neither the main body of Baker's Brigade down in the valley, nor the rear-guard on the hill above, had been molested during the night of the 10th ; and early next morning the 5th Punjab Cavalry crossed the river and pushed forward to a point on the Ghazni road which commanded the approaches into Maidan and its adjacent valleys. "I had thus effected the first object of my march," wrote Baker in his Despatch, "and was hoping to find that General Macpherson had carried out his, as originally determined on,<sup>1</sup> which would have brought him then in direct communication with myself and have enabled us, had the main body of the enemy not made a forward movement in the direction of Kabul, to have assumed the offensive against them on most advantageous terms."<sup>2</sup>

At 9 a.m. the rear-guard reached camp, and Baker was able to hasten forward with the Infantry in support of the Cavalry. After fording the river, the column, for a time, turned its back on Sherpur,

<sup>1</sup> Baker did not even know that Macpherson's Brigade had been diverted to Kohistan.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> It is clear from this extract that Baker had shared Roberts's expectation that Mahomed Jan would allow himself to be trapped at Argandeh.—H. B. H.

the track followed by it running, at first, nearly due west and then curving round in a north-easterly direction to the Pass that leads into the Maidan Valley. All along, on the heights, large numbers of tribesmen could be seen moving parallel with the British advance—hundreds of Wardaks on the left, thousands of Logaris on the right. Only a few shots were fired into the main body, but hardly had the long train of baggage animals left the encamping ground than the rear-guard, consisting of eighty men of the 92nd Highlanders and two hundred of the 5th Punjab Infantry, became hotly engaged. It was admirably commanded by Captain G. K. M'Callum; but, so persistent and harassing were the enemy's attacks, that it took him four hours to get over four miles of good road, and on approaching the Maidan Kotal, the peril became so extreme that Baker himself went back with two mountain guns, a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, and a hundred rifles of the 5th Punjab Infantry, to protect the baggage on its way through the Pass.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the advanced guard, on approaching the Argandeh Pass, had discovered that it was strongly held by the enemy, and that the road to Kabul was closed.<sup>2</sup> It was already late in the afternoon, but Baker felt that he must dislodge the Afghans, there and then, lest they should rush his camp under cover of darkness. The order to attack was quickly given, and Major White, with a detachment of the 92nd, supported by the mountain guns, dashed forward with splendid élan and drove the tribesmen headlong from their strong position.<sup>3</sup> This success secured to Baker's tired troops a quiet night; but Baker himself, certain that disaster alone could account for the absence of all news of Macpherson's Brigade, spent anxious hours. Again and again, he sent

<sup>1</sup> "This was effected in a very satisfactory manner, and great credit is due to Captain Wynter, 33rd (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment, who was the senior transport officer. . . . My thanks are also due to Captain M'Callum, 92nd Highlanders." (Baker's Despatch.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Altogether it was a brilliant little affair, the attack being made without the slightest hesitation and against very great odds, and every credit is due to Major White, 92nd Highlanders, for the manner in which it was conducted." (Ibid.)



out messengers, but only one got through the Chardeh Valley, into which fresh Afghan levies were continuing to pour, and not one returned with the desired tidings.

When the march was resumed soon after daybreak on the 12th, it was found that the tribesmen with whom the Brigade had been engaged the evening before, had occupied a strong position, two and a half miles in rear of the camp, from which they were now trying to work round the British right. Divining that their object was to cut him off from Kabul by closing the Argandeh Pass, Baker moved forward rapidly with his main body to reinforce his pickets, and occupy it in strength before they could carry out their purpose. From its summit, he was at last able to open heliographic communication with Sherpur, and the intelligence conveyed to him was of so serious a nature that even without the precise order to return immediately, he would have strained every nerve to reach cantonments in time to be of service that day ; and as it was vain to hope that the animals, worn out with three days of toilsome marching, could quicken their pace, or that the enemy would cease their incessant attacks upon the rear-guard, he, for a time, entertained the idea of rendering his Force more mobile by placing his baggage and transport in Ghulam Hyder's Fort, twelve miles short of Sherpur. It was a desperate expedient, yet he went so far as to make arrangements for victualling the fort and strengthening its defences ; but when he found that the rear-guard, constantly pressed by the enemy who clung in crowds to all the heights, had taken four hours from the camping ground to the mouth of the Argandeh Pass, he saw that, march as he might, after establishing the baggage and its defenders within its walls, he could not arrive in the vicinity of Kabul in time to come into action that day, and abandoned a plan from which nothing could be gained, and by which much must be risked.<sup>1</sup> Slowly, but surely, Baker

<sup>1</sup> " On the last march, such was the exhaustion of the transport animals, it was actually proposed at one time to pack the baggage in Gholam Hyder's

worked his way through the Chardeh Valley; his main body unopposed; his rear-guard, which absorbed more than the half of the Brigade, almost continuously in action; the 5th Punjab Cavalry covering the movement,<sup>1</sup> and, from time to time, inflicting some loss upon the enemy, whose numbers grew from hour to hour. Near Killa Kazi the General set fire to the village in which the Governor of Maidan, Sirdar Mahomed Hussein Khan, was murdered, and left it enveloped in smoke.<sup>2</sup>

At the Deh-i-Masang Gorge, he found awaiting him an order to retire at once into Sherpur, and, marching straight on, entered cantonments with his main body a little before 6 p.m., followed at 8.30 by the rear-guard and the baggage.<sup>3</sup>

## CASUALTIES IN BRIGADIER-GENERAL BAKER'S BRIGADE

*Killed.*

One man, 5th Punjab Cavalry.

Two men, 5th Punjab Infantry.

*Wounded.*

Four men, No. 2 Mountain Battery.

One man, 5th Punjab Cavalry.

Two men, 92nd Highlanders.

Five men, 5th Punjab Infantry.

One follower.

Total 3 men killed, and 13 wounded.

Fort, at the far end of the Chardeh Valley, from which not a man could have escaped alive . . . . The expedition had been productive of much danger, and little or no profit." (Robertson's *Kuram, Kabul, and Kandahar*, p. 127.)

<sup>1</sup> Regimental Records of the 5th Punjab Cavalry.

<sup>2</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, p. 320.

A cruel and unjustifiable proceeding, as the villagers were not implicated in the murder, which was committed, as already said, by the Wardak people.—H. B. H.

<sup>3</sup> Apparently, Baker kept to himself the bad news received on the Chardeh Kotal, for Duke writes:—"As we approached Kabul, the Bala Hissar and Takhti-Shah Heights were constantly lighted up with gun-flashes, which somewhat surprised us; nor, indeed, until we had entered the Deh-i-Masang Gorge . . . did we hear of the severe encounter that had occurred the day before." (*Recollections of the Kabul Campaign*, p. 242.)

The return of Baker's Brigade was welcome to Roberts, both as strengthening the garrison of Sherpur and as enabling him to take the offensive more vigorously, and, as he hoped, more successfully than had been possible in the absence of so large a part of his Force. Before dawn that morning, Lieutenant-Colonel Noel Money had left Macpherson's camp with—

2 guns No. 1 Mountain Battery,  
205 men Detachments 67th and 72nd regiments,<sup>1</sup>  
150 men 3rd Sikhs,  
195 men 5th Gurkhas,

to dislodge the Afghans from the Takht-i-Shah, on the slopes of which mountain, steep, scarped, broken with jagged masses of rock and strewn with huge boulders, they had erected tiers of breastworks, one above the other, each commanding the interior of the one below it. The position was shelled for hours and many gallant attempts were made to carry it, but, though Macpherson sent two more companies of Infantry to assist the frontal attack by taking the hill in reverse, the Afghans clung to their sangars with such tenacity that at 4.30—the guns having ceased firing an hour before for lack of ammunition—Money, who had lost touch with Macpherson, had to signal to Sherpur that he could get no further.<sup>2</sup> Roberts heliographed back that he was to hold on for the night, and the next day to co-operate with a force that would be sent against the Afghan position from the direction of the village of Ben-i-Hissar.<sup>3</sup>

In this day's fighting, three non-commissioned officers, Colour-Sergeant W. Macdonald, Sergeant W. Cox, and Sergeant R. McIlveen, greatly distinguished themselves; the first-named displaying

<sup>1</sup> Jarvis's picket on Sher Darwaza. Original strength 215.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> "We could see nothing of him (Money), but saw enemy in great strength on top of a frightfully steep position. The result was that about 4.30 Money signalled he could not get on, so the attack failed. That is the second defeat in two days; one more, and we shall have to shut ourselves up all the winter." (Macgregor, Vol. II. p. 162.)

<sup>3</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

conspicuous coolness and intelligence whilst superintending the construction of breastworks under a heavy fire.<sup>1</sup>

## CASUALTIES IN COLONEL NOEL MONEY'S FORCE

### *Killed.*

Three men, 3rd Sikhs.  
One man, 5th Gurkhas.

### *Wounded.*

Major J. Cook, V.C., 5th Gurkhas (mortally).<sup>2</sup>  
Lieutenant C. H. Fergusson, 72nd Highlanders.  
Lieutenant E. J. N. Fasken, 3rd Sikhs.  
One Native Officer, 3rd Sikhs.  
One man, 67th Foot.  
One man, 72nd Highlanders.  
Six men, 5th Gurkhas.

Total 4 men killed, and 4 officers and 8 men wounded.

It had been rumoured in Sherpur that, during the coming night, the enemy would attack the northern side of the cantonment, and the Behmaru Heights, which formed its sole defence, were occupied as a precaution. The rumour proved false, but though the troops within the walls were undisturbed, great anxiety was felt for Money, bivouacking on the hills above the Bala Hissar, and for Macpherson, who had been ordered "to hold the Deh-i-Masang Gorge at all hazards."<sup>3</sup> Those hazards were great, for after posting a picket in a building above Baber's tomb, he had only two hundred and seventeen rifles of the 67th, and one hundred and six of the 72nd, left where-with to repel an attack on the gorge, and was unable to take up the best position for its defence, because he dared not lose sight of Wali Mahomed's camp, having been warned by the Sirdar that his escort

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> "By Major John Cook's death Her Majesty has lost the services of a most distinguished and gallant officer, and the Kabul Field Force a comrade whom one and all honoured and admired." (Ibid.)

<sup>3</sup> Macpherson's Despatch.

were not to be trusted.<sup>1</sup> Luckily, either the Afghans did not know his weakness or lacked the generalship which would have taken advantage of it ; and, for him too, the night proved a quiet one.

At 9 a.m. on the 13th of December the following troops paraded near the King's Garden, preparatory to entering on the operation which was to retrieve Money's check of the previous day :—

6 guns C-3 Royal Artillery . .	Major W. R. Craster.
4 guns No. 2 Mountain Battery . .	Captain G. Swinley.
1 Squadron 9th Lancers . . .	Captain B. Gough.
2½ Squadrons 5th Punjab Cavalry .	Major B. Williams.
92nd Highlanders . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Parker.
Wing 3rd Sikhs . . . .	Major C. J. Griffiths.
Guide Corps . . . .	Colonel F. H. Jenkins.

This column, the command of which was entrusted to Baker, even when reinforced by one hundred and fifty men of the 5th Punjab Infantry under Major Pratt, cannot have exceeded 450 sabres and 1,500 rifles, whereas the ten thousand Afghans whom Massy had had to face on the 11th, had had their numbers more than doubled by the arrival of the Kohistanis, and the Logar and Wardak contingents, which had harassed Baker's march on the 12th. These reinforcements had established themselves in Ben-i-Hissar and other villages lying between Kabul and the Sang-i-Nawishta Defile, whilst the main body of Mahomed Jan's army held in great strength a spur, which juts out in an easterly direction from the ridge that separates the Chardeh from the Kabul Valley. The enemy's right rested on the eastern extremity of this spur, overlooking Ben-i-Hissar, and their left extended up to the level and strongly fortified summit of the Takht-i-Shah.

Soon after Baker's column had passed the Bala Hissar, the tribesmen began streaming out of the villages and swarming up the steep slopes of the spur to join their comrades on its crest, but a bold and rapid movement frustrated their purpose.

<sup>1</sup> "Sirdar Wali Mahomed had assured me that his men were not to be trusted, so I did not deem it expedient to move from his camp to the gorge." (Ibid.)



There is nothing in war more striking, more picturesque, than a fight on a hillside: the assailing infantry gradually opening out to right and left, like a huge fan, and slowly climbing upwards as they open; the sharp ring of the rifles, echoed and re-echoed from crag to crag; the dull boom of the guns, searching every nook and cranny with their fire; the shells rising high in air above the advancing troops and bursting as they fall amidst the groups of mountaineers, born soldiers, who know well how to cling to every available coign of vantage, and yet are swept back, step by step, by the irresistible advance of their disciplined foes. Such was the sight witnessed from the walls of Sherpur, as covered by a well-directed fire of the guns, the 92nd Highlanders, led by Major White and supported by the Guides, scaled the spur and seized the very centre of the enemy's position. The advance was led at first by Lieutenant St. John Forbes and his Colour-Sergeant H. Drummond, but, in an ugly rush of the Afghans, both were killed, fighting bravely side by side. Their fall, and "the numbers and fury of their antagonists," for a moment "staggered even the brave Highlanders;"<sup>1</sup> but Lieutenant Dick Cunyngham springing forward, careless of the heavy fire to which he exposed himself, by his example and encouraging words quickly rallied his men—a timely and gallant action, duly rewarded by the Victoria Cross. Again the Highlanders pressed upwards, and in a very short time both they and the Guides, no less eager and forward, had gained the summit of the ridge and cut the Afghans in two, many of them retreating into the Kabul Valley and occupying Ben-i-Hissar.

Whilst the Mountain Battery was being brought up to cover a further advance, the men had time to regain their breath before starting to scale the precipitous, rocky side of Takht-i-Shah. Fighting every foot of the way—for the Afghans grew more and more dogged at every step—they reached its summit about midday to find that it was already in the hands of a mixed body of Highlanders, Sikhs, and

<sup>1</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 284.

Gurkhas who, under Major Sim, had worked their way up from the position gained by Money the previous afternoon ; Colour-Sergeant J. Yule, who captured two standards with his own hands, being the first man to set foot within the enemy's last sangar.

The task set to Baker had been accomplished ; but the gain to result from it seemed, from the first, uncertain. Hardly had his troops established themselves on the top of a high mountain than large bodies of the enemy were seen to issue from the city and to occupy two fortified villages on either side the road leading to Sherpur, evidently with the intention of severing Baker's line of communication with cantonments. One of these villages was quickly captured by the Reserve of Highlanders and Sikhs, commanded by Colonel Parker ; but it proved no easy matter to gain possession of the other, for the field guns made no impression either on its ramparts or its solidly built gateway. In the end, the walls were scaled with ladders by a detachment of the 5th Punjab Infantry, under Lieutenant Jameson, who, together with Subadar Budh Sing, was brought to notice in Baker's Despatch "for the forward way in which they led their men."<sup>1</sup> Both villages were destroyed, and all the defenders of the one last captured perished.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding these local successes the general situation was still very unsatisfactory, owing to the enormous number of tribesmen who were now in the field, and the many directions from which they were making their presence felt ; so Baker, well aware of the weakness

<sup>1</sup> "The artillery fire having failed to effect a breach in the gateway, I ordered that the gates should be set on fire ; an opening, however, was only partially effected by these means, and the fort had eventually to be captured by means of scaling ladders, which were constructed of poles and the men's puggrees." (Baker's Despatch.)

<sup>2</sup> "On retiring my force for further action, if required, in the vicinity of Siah Sang, I deputed the destruction of these two villages to the 5th Punjab Infantry, who carried out the work in a most satisfactory manner. . . . The enemy in this village (the one last captured) fought to the last, and were necessarily all killed." (Ibid.)

of the Sherpur garrison, and warned by heliograph that the enemy were advancing towards Behmaru, made haste to draw in his scattered troops and to place the majority of them in a less isolated position. The Gurkhas, under Major Sim, he left to guard the Takht-i-Shah, whilst the 92nd, the Guides, and the Mountain Battery returned to the valley, to be at hand either to operate against the enemy on the Siah Sang Heights, or to re-enter Sherpur, as circumstances might determine.

Whilst the Infantry was engaged in storming the Afghan stronghold on the Takht-i-Shah, the Cavalry was kept busy breaking up large bodies of tribesmen pressing towards the cantonment from north and east. One of these was routed by a squadron of the 5th Punjab Cavalry under Major J. C. Stewart;<sup>1</sup> another, by a squadron of the Guides commanded by Major G. Stewart, and a squadron of the 9th Lancers under Captain S. G. Butson; and, later, the whole Cavalry Brigade, commanded by Massy in person, went out to disperse a still more formidable gathering, which from the Siah Sang Heights was threatening both Sherpur and Baker's flank. While Massy turned southward to dislodge the main body of the enemy, Major G. Stewart of the Guides was ordered to attack a number of Kohistanis who had been observed moving northward. With his subaltern, Lieutenant H. W. Hughes, Stewart galloped straight down upon the enemy, who steadily awaited his approach; then, whilst still on the move, he suddenly changed the direction of his attack, and falling upon their flank, first rolled them completely up, and then drove them, panic-stricken, before him, riding down and killing many. Massy, meanwhile, finding that the enemy, though much shaken by the severe shelling to which their position had been subjected, were still holding

<sup>1</sup> "I avail myself of this opportunity of stating that the 5th Punjab Cavalry is one of the most efficient corps I have ever had the honour of serving with in the field, and I attribute it mainly to their officers being one and all good soldiers." (Baker's Despatch.)

on to the southern side of the Siah Sang Plateau, dismounted some of his men, and when their heavy fire compelled the Afghans to fall back, he launched against them Captain Butson's squadron of the 9th Lancers, the 5th Punjab Cavalry acting in support, and the rest of the Cavalry following in reserve. The charge was splendidly made and brilliantly successful; but it cost the life of its brave leader, shot through the heart, in the act of shouting to his men to follow him "for the honour of the old 9th."<sup>1</sup> Captain J. J. S. Chisholme, the next senior, though severely wounded, refused to leave the field and brought the Lancers out of action, and Lieutenant C. J. W. Trower, the only other officer left in the squadron, who twice had his horse shot under him, was also wounded.<sup>2</sup> In this encounter the tribesmen showed remarkable courage and determination, and though they suffered severely by the charge, numbers of them still clung to every nullah and ravine, where, safe from further pursuit, they kept up a galling fire on the temporary victors.

Satisfied that the day's operations had "broken up the combination of the tribes, and that the various sections had scattered and returned to their homes,"<sup>3</sup> Roberts recalled the 72nd Highlanders to cantonments and ordered Macpherson to abandon the Deh-i-Masang Defile, and in its stead to occupy the Sher Darwaza Heights with the 67th, as a support to the Gurkhas entrenched on the Takht-i-Shah.<sup>4</sup> The 67th were left undisturbed during the night, but the Gurkhas were so hard pressed that they signalled by lamp for artillery and ammunition. No artillery could possibly scale in darkness a steep and rugged mountain, but Macpherson sent off at midnight a supply

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Wolseley's Diary.

<sup>2</sup> Massy's Despatch.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts's Despatch. This sanguine view, though not endorsed by officers of large frontier experience, was shared by many of the garrison. "We were in high feather," writes Robertson, "and the final defeat and dispersion of the enemy on the morrow was looked forward to with certainty." (*Kuram, Kabul, and Kandahar*, p. 150.)

<sup>4</sup> Macpherson's Despatch.

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of ammunition in charge of a hundred men of the 67th, and two guns followed at dawn.<sup>1</sup>

The Casualties on the 13th December were as follows :—

## BRIGADIER-GENERAL DUNHAM MASSY'S BRIGADE.

### *Killed.*

Captain S. G. Butson . . . . .	9th Lancers.
Four men . . . . .	"
Three men . . . . .	Guides Cavalry.

### *Wounded.*

Captain J. J. S. Chisholme . . . . .	9th Lancers.
Lieutenant C. J. W. Trower . . . . .	"
Eight men . . . . .	"
Eight men . . . . .	Guides Cavalry.
One man . . . . .	14th Bengal Lancers.

## BRIGADIER-GENERAL BAKER'S BRIGADE.

### *Killed.*

Lieutenant St. J. W. Forbes . . . . .	92nd Highlanders.
Two men . . . . .	"
Three men . . . . .	5th Punjab Cavalry.

### *Wounded.*

Nineteen men . . . . .	92nd Highlanders.
One man . . . . .	No. 2 Mountain Battery.
One man . . . . .	Guides Infantry.
Four men . . . . .	5th Punjab Infantry.
One man . . . . .	3rd Sikhs.
One follower . . . . .	"

## TOTAL CASUALTIES.

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Men.</i>	<i>Followers.</i>	<i>Horses.</i>
Killed . . . . .	2	12	—	20
Wounded . . . . .	2	43	1	32
	—	—	—	—
	4	55	1	52

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's Despatch.



## CHAPTER XX

### The Disaster of the 14th of December, 1879

THE sanguine expectations of the evening of the 13th of December were falsified by the aspect of affairs on the morning of the 14th. Instead of a break-up of the tribal combination and the dispersal of its different sections to their homes, the number of tribesmen under arms had greatly increased during the night, and, what was more serious, Mahomed Jan had taken advantage of the withdrawal of the Highlanders from the Deh-i-Masang Defile to occupy the city and the Asmai Heights—the south-western half of the ridge which stretches from the Deh-i-Masang Gorge to the Nanachi Pass—by which bold step he severed Macpherson's line of retreat, and secured for himself a position equally valuable for offensive and defensive purposes. The low hills lying between the ridge and cantonments formed his first line of defence ; the Asmai Heights, the second ; and the key to the entire position, which was held by some nine or ten thousand men, was a conical hill overlooking the Aliabad Pass, and connected with the main range by a narrow neck of land. At the north-western end of the ridge, a large contingent of Kohistanis had established itself independently of the main Afghan force. Sherpur and the Asmai Heights were within cannon shot of each other, yet, though cantonments would have been untenable had Mahomed Jan possessed artillery, great rocks and boulders afforded the tribesmen excellent shelter against the British guns.

The difficult task of dislodging the enemy from this strong position

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was assigned to Baker, who, about 9 a.m., marched out of the Headquarters gate with—

4 guns C-3 Royal Artillery . . .	Major W. R. Craster.
4 guns No. 2 Mountain Battery . .	Captain G. Swinley.
3 Squadrons 14th Bengal Lancers .	Lieutenant-Colonel T. G. Ross.
194 Rifles 72nd Highlanders . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel F. Brownlow.
100 Rifles 92nd Highlanders . . .	Captain D. F. Gordon.
422 Rifles Guides Infantry . . .	Colonel F. H. Jenkins.
470 Rifles 5th Punjab Infantry . .	Major H. M. Pratt.
Detachment Sappers and Miners . .	Lieutenant C. Nugent.

With a view to ascertaining the enemy's strength and dispositions Baker threw forward his cavalry, but its advance was soon stopped by the broken nature of the country, and it had to take up a post of observation on his right flank. Covered by the fire of the guns, posted on rising ground near the village of Killa Boland, the Highlanders and Guides soon carried the enemy's first line of defence, including the conical hill. Leaving Lieutenant-Colonel Clarke here with sixty-four men of the 72nd and sixty of the Guides, afterwards strengthened by four guns No. 2 Mountain Battery and a hundred rifles of the 5th Punjab Infantry, Jenkins now swung forward his right, and, under a brisk cannonade from the guns below and from Morgan's Mountain Battery on the Sher Darwaza Heights, pressed forward to the capture of the Afghans' second line. The Highlanders, led by Brownlow, climbed the steepest part of the ridge with great dash and resolution, the Guides, on their right, facilitating their advance by perpetually outflanking the enemy. Every point of importance along the ridge was stubbornly defended, but one after the other was taken at the point of the bayonet. In a last severe struggle for the possession of the ridge's highest peak, where a number of Ghazis had entrenched themselves, the gallantry of Lance-Corporal George Seller of the 72nd Highlanders "excited the admiration of all who saw it."<sup>1</sup> Nothing could have been finer than the whole

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch of the 23rd of January, 1880. Seller, badly wounded in the attack, was recommended for the Victoria Cross.

operation ; but it owed not a little of its success to a piece of "splendid audacity." To create a diversion, Macpherson had sent the 67th Foot across the river, one of whose officers, Major G. Baker, seeing that the enemy's attention was absorbed by the frontal attack, crept up in their rear with two companies, and reached the summit of the ridge at the same moment as the Highlanders and Guides.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst General Baker's Infantry had been fighting their way along the Asmai Heights, the Cavalry had been busy clearing off the enemy from the northern and eastern face of the cantonments. Soon after midday, Hugh Gough went out with two guns Royal Horse Artillery, a squadron of the 9th Lancers and one of the Guides, joined en route by a detachment of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, to drive back and, if possible, disperse a large body that was moving southward, evidently with the intention of re-occupying the Siah Sang Heights. At sight of the cavalry the tribesmen fell back ; but, checked and hindered by numerous watercourses, Gough never came within striking distance of them, and when they reached the foot of the Kotal leading into Kohistan, he saw that it was vain to follow them up any longer and abandoned the chase. In his absence a brilliant little cavalry action had been fought. Captain W. J. Vousden, who, from the walls of the King's Garden, had been watching the movements of the enemy to the south of the cantonment, suddenly saw a favourable opportunity for a charge, and at the head of only two Native officers and eight men of his regiment, the 5th Punjab Cavalry, without waiting for a troop that was a hundred yards in his rear, he dashed into the middle of three or four hundred men. "I never in my life saw anything more gallant than the behaviour of this little band," wrote Colonel Money, who from the Sher Darwaza Heights had witnessed the affair, to Vousden's commanding officer, Major Williams. "The leader, whose conduct was imitated by the others, never looked

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch ; see also Macpherson's of the 27th December, 1879.

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behind to see if they were supported, but just went in for the enemy, cutting down man after man. There were at least two hundred firing at them, but they seemed to bear charmed lives. I fancy they owed their safety to their activity, for they wheeled and dashed about in such a way it would have been difficult to hit them." Despite their activity, four of the gallant band were hit, of whom one was killed outright and two died of their wounds.<sup>1</sup> All the surviving officers and men received the Order of Merit for Bravery, and Vousden was rewarded with the Victoria Cross.

So far, everything had gone well with the British troops, and Roberts, who, from the flat roof of the Head-Quarters Gate, had been watching through a telescope Baker's dispositions and the movements of the Afghans, was feeling quite satisfied with the success of his offensive tactics, when, about one o'clock, Macpherson heliographed that very large bodies of the enemy were moving northwards from Indaki, with the apparent intention of effecting a junction with the hostile force that still held the hills towards Kohistan, and of endeavouring to retake the original position.<sup>2</sup>

This serious news was very quickly confirmed by a report from Ross, commanding Baker's Cavalry, who, as soon as the Heights were in Jenkins's hands, had crossed the Aliabad Pass to find the Chardeh Valley full of tribesmen moving northwards, whose fire quickly compelled him to retreat.<sup>3</sup> Baker, meanwhile, had directed Jenkins to withdraw his troops from the Asmai Heights to the enemy's

<sup>1</sup> "Ressaldar Amir Ali Shah wounded, Jemadar Thunda Sing (died of his wound), Kote Duffadar Jewant Sing (mortally wounded), one Sowar and three horses killed." (Regimental Records 5th Punjab Cavalry.)

<sup>2</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>3</sup> "In the meantime the enemy from Indikee—to the number of fully 15,000 or 20,000; they covered the plain for miles—had marched out as if going to Killa Kazi, or Argandeh. Their array was orderly enough; and when they had all reached the plain, they suddenly faced about and came down in the shape of a crescent upon the heights we were holding." (Hensman, p. 211.)

first line of defence, with the exception of two hundred men of the 67th, who were to be left to hold the highest peak of the range. Unfortunately this message had been delayed in transit,<sup>1</sup> and before Baker's orders could be obeyed, the Kohistanis, who had hitherto taken no part in the action, swept down upon the Conical Hill. Baker hurried off his cavalry to Clarke's assistance and heliographed to Head-Quarters for three hundred infantry. Roberts sent two hundred men of the 3rd Sikhs, and Baker himself pushed forward a hundred of the 5th Punjab Infantry; but both detachments arrived too late to save the position. All that men could do was done by the little force by which it was held. Spens, of the 72nd Highlanders, flung himself upon the leading Kohistanis and continued to fight "in the most gallant and determined manner" till he was cut down.<sup>2</sup> The officers of the Mountain Battery, Captain Swinley, Lieutenant J. Montanaro, Lieutenant A. F. Liddell, stood to their guns till they were literally swept off the hill by the overwhelming numbers and irresistible onrush of the foe, two of the guns being lost in the retreat.<sup>3</sup> Surgeon J. Duke, under very heavy fire, was unremitting in his attention to the wounded, whilst a Native Officer, Jemadar Abdul Rahman of the 5th Punjab Infantry, was the last man to abandon

<sup>1</sup> "This order was a considerable time in transit as the advance heliographic station was on the conical hill, and the message had to be forwarded from there by foot messenger." (Baker's Despatch of 20th December, 1879.)

<sup>2</sup> "I would ask that this might be considered as a special case, as I well know that the hearty wish of every officer and man in the regiment is, that the Victoria Cross might be awarded for this most gallant act in which the officer sacrificed his life, in the hope that his men might rally round him and regain a position occupied by the enemy some eighty yards in front of the Conical Hill." (Baker's Despatch.)

<sup>3</sup> "The guns could only be partially mounted on the mules before the pressure of the enemy's masses and the difficult nature of the ground, converted the retirement from an untenable position into a confused retreat, which all the efforts of the officers failed to arrest." (Letter of the *Times*' Own Correspondent, dated Kabul, December 14th, 1879.)



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the Conical Hill.<sup>1</sup> Witnessing for the third time in four days the defeat of his troops and the bringing to nought of his plans, Sir F. Roberts realized at last that courage and determination are qualities not confined to Europeans, and that a large irregular force must, in the end, prevail over a small disciplined army, if the disproportion between them passes a certain point.<sup>2</sup> A message from the Sher Darwaza Heights, received whilst he was anxiously following the fortunes of the retreating detachment, quickened his sense of what that disproportion had come to be. The Afghans, so Macpherson heliographed, advancing from north, south, and west, were increasing momentarily; to which intelligence the young signalling officer, Robertson, added the graphic touch that the crowds in the Chardeh Valley reminded him of Epsom on the Derby Day.<sup>3</sup>

With the testimony of his own eyes thus confirmed by the message from his experienced lieutenant, there was no further room for hesitation; however bitter the word "retirement" might be to a British commander,<sup>4</sup> the moment had arrived when it must be spoken; so, closing his telescope with a snap,<sup>5</sup> Roberts turned for a moment from watching the struggle on the Conical Hill to issue orders for the withdrawal of his scattered troops from their "isolated positions,"

<sup>1</sup> Baker's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> "Up till noon on the 14th I had no idea of the extraordinary numbers they were able to bring together, and I had no reason to believe that it would be possible for them to cope with disciplined troops; but the manner in which the conical hill had been retaken gave me a more correct idea of their strength and determination, and shook my confidence in the ability of my comparatively small force to resist the ever-increasing hordes, on ground which gave every advantage to numerical superiority." (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 291.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 292. Lieutenant E. E. Robertson was not twenty-one years old.—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> "It was a bitter thought that it might be my duty to retire for a time within the defences of Sherpur, a measure which would involve the abandonment of the City and the Bala Hissar, and which I knew, moreover, would give heart to the tribesmen." (Ibid. p. 291.)

<sup>5</sup> Sir Michael Kennedy.

with a view to "securing the safety of our large cantonment, and avoiding what had now become a useless sacrifice of life."<sup>1</sup>

To withdraw from a single isolated position, in presence of a foe flushed with victory and outnumbering the retiring force by ten to one, is no easy matter;<sup>2</sup> but the difficulties are far greater when that force is broken up into half a dozen widely separated detachments, none of which can look for help to any of the others; and never were troops more split up and scattered than those who had now to act on Roberts's orders to concentrate at Sherpur.

At Lattaband, twenty-five miles from the cantonment, were two mountain guns, part of the 28th Punjab Infantry, and a wing of the 23rd Pioneers, commanded by Colonel J. Hudson; Butkhak, ten miles to the south-east of Sherpur, was held by the 12th Bengal Cavalry and fifty bayonets; Macpherson's and Baker's Brigades were engaged with the enemy on the Sher Darwaza and Asmai Heights; Gough's detachment of Artillery and Cavalry was four or five miles off, on the confines of Kohistan; and the big, badly protected cantonment of Sherpur was held by only a few hundred men.<sup>3</sup>

The order for the recall of the troops given, Roberts returned to his post of observation to watch with "intense anxiety" the retirement of Baker's and Macpherson's Brigades. Under Colonel Jenkins's able direction, the Highlanders and Guides withdrew from the Asmai

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> "It is comparatively easy for a small body of well-trained soldiers, such as those of which the army in India is composed, to act on the offensive against Asiatics, however powerful they may be in point of numbers. . . . But a retirement is a different matter. They become full of confidence and valour the moment they see any signs of their opponents being unable to resist them, and if there is the smallest symptom of unsteadiness, wavering, or confusion, a disaster is certain to occur." (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 293.)

<sup>3</sup> "There is no denying that the night of Sunday, the 14th, was one of very considerable anxiety to all who knew the imperfection of the existing defences and the many points vulnerable to attack." (Letter of the *Times*' Own Correspondent of December 26th, 1879, published February 13th, 1880.)

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Heights. The ground favoured the Afghans, who, shouting and brandishing their knives, swarmed down upon the handful of British troops retiring before them ; but the skill of their commanders, Colonel Brownlow and Major R. B. P. P. Campbell, and the dauntless bearing of every officer kept the men so absolutely steady that, aided by the skilful manœuvring of the 14th Bengal Lancers in the plain below, and by the efficient support rendered by the 5th Punjab Infantry, under Major Pratt, and of two hundred Sikhs, under Lieutenant W. B. Aislabie, held in reserve near the guns, the difficult movement was successfully accomplished, and at 4.45, just as evening was closing in, Baker's force got safely back to Sherpur.

Where all had done well, three officers had specially distinguished themselves—Captain A. G. Hammond of the Guides ; Captain Duncan Gordon, commanding the detachment of the 92nd Highlanders ; and Surgeon J. Lewtas. The first, who had been very forward in the storming of the Heights, held on to them, with only a few men, after the capture of the Conical Hill, until the enemy were within thirty yards of him ; and, later, during the retreat, stayed to assist in carrying away one of his wounded men, with the Afghans close at hand ;<sup>1</sup> the second, though twice wounded, continued to lead his men till compelled to leave the field ; the third was conspicuous for his devotion to the wounded under the most trying circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

If the withdrawal from the Asmai Ridge was attended with great difficulties, the retirement from the Takht-i-Shah and the Sher Darwaza Heights taxed to the uttermost the skill of the commander and the courage and coolness of his officers and men. Fortunately for all concerned, Macpherson was a man of great courage, excellent judgment, and calm temper, just the qualities needed to keep troops steady and confident in the midst of danger. During the morning,

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch. Hammond received the Victoria Cross.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

he had given all the assistance in his power to Baker's Force, sending Lieutenant-Colonel C. B. Knowles, with the 67th Foot, across the Deh-i-Masang Gorge to operate on the enemy's rear, and enfilading, as has already been mentioned, the Afghans' position with his marksmen and guns, posted on the Sher Darwaza Heights. At one o'clock, in obedience to an order from Roberts, he recalled the 67th from the Gorge, and, an hour later, he received the message which bade him bring back the whole of his Brigade to Sherpur.<sup>1</sup>

The evacuation of the Takht-i-Shah was deliberately and successfully carried through by Major J. M. Sim, in the face of a vigilant enemy, prepared to take advantage of any opening he might give them, and the troops once concentrated, the march back to cantonments began. The 3rd Sikhs, under their able commander, Colonel Noel Money, led the way, closely followed by Morgan's Mountain Battery, the 5th Gurkhas, and the Signalling party of the 72nd Highlanders, the 67th Foot bringing up the rear. The head of the column, after crossing the river and marching through the Gorge, traversed the city, and had just reached the suburb of Deh-i-Afghan when Macpherson was obliged to recall the Sikhs and Gurkhas to the help of the 67th, which was being hotly attacked in rear by one body of tribesmen, following it up through the Gorge, and on the left flank by another, descending from the Asmai Heights. Leaving a party of the 3rd Sikhs to hold the suburb and protect the baggage, Money instantly responded to the summons, and the manner in which the Gurkhas—now the leading regiment—fought their way back through the tortuous lanes which in Kabul are dignified with the name of streets, won high commendation from Macpherson, who in his Despatch made special mention of three officers, Major Sim, Lieutenant A. R. Martin, and Lieutenant C. C. Chevenix-Trench. Macpherson also brought to notice the courage and coolness of Lieutenant R. B. W.

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's Despatch.

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Fisher of the 10th Hussars, who was in charge of the transport animals, and also the gallant conduct of Hospital Assistant Nihal Chand in going under fire to the assistance of the wounded.

Once more the Brigade moved on, exposed to the enemy's fire from both flanks; the rear-guard perpetually pressed upon and harassed as it wound its way, first, through the narrow streets and, then, through the numerous gardens and orchards lying between Kabul and Sherpur. Again and again, it looked as if a further advance were impossible; but the well-considered dispositions of Colonel Knowles, the good judgment shown by Money in seizing a walled garden from which he kept down the enemy's fire, and, above all, the perfect steadiness of every officer and man, saved the Brigade from destruction, and Macpherson's troops marched into Sherpur at nightfall,<sup>1</sup> each regiment and detachment, as it filed through the Head-Quarters Gate, receiving Roberts's "warm congratulations and heartfelt thanks,"<sup>2</sup> as their comrades of Baker's Brigade had received them a little while before.

As Macpherson's men marched through the Head-Quarters Gate, on the western side of the cantonment, Gough's Cavalry re-entered through the gap in its eastern wall. On approaching Sherpur it had been challenged by a fatigue party of the 23rd Pioneers, who were hard at work cutting down trees, constructing abattis, and laying

<sup>1</sup> "By dusk everyone was in cantonments and we could count our casualties. They were unusually heavy for Afghan fighting, but have given us valuable experience, as we no longer despise our enemy, . . . and we shall no longer send flying columns over the hills and break up our army into three weak parts." (Hensman, p. 214.)

<sup>2</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 293.

<sup>3</sup> The author saw Colonel Lockhart, Macpherson's principal Staff Officer, soon after he got back into Sherpur, who exclaimed:—"Thank God! we have scraped through that business! At one time I expected we should have been overwhelmed." Lockhart attributed the safety of the Brigade to the courage and skill of Macpherson, Money, and Knowles (he might have added his own name to the list), and to the high discipline of the men and to the absolute confidence which they reposed in their officers.—H. B. H.



down wire entanglements. Subadar Nutta Sing, the Native officer in command of the party, took the astonished General aside and in graphic words told how Baker's small force, overwhelmed by a wave of thirty to forty thousand Afghans, had lost the position it had won; how all the troops had been recalled; and the whole Force was now fort-bound—*killaband*.<sup>1</sup> Dismissing his men to their quarters, Gough hastened to the General, to find "not a shadow of disappointment or despondency in Roberts's countenance" though the tale told by Nutta Sing was "all too true."<sup>2</sup> Such equanimity was of inestimable value at this critical time; but the unshakeable confidence in the superiority of the European over the Asiatic, of the disciplined over the undisciplined man, which gave it birth, had its evil side. Even after the reverse of the 11th of December, so confident was the British General in his ability to disperse the huge gathering that hemmed him in, that he took only very perfunctory steps towards improving the defences of the cantonment; and had Mahomed Jan been aware of their defective condition and known the weakness of the garrison, he could have captured Sherpur almost at any hour between the 11th and the 14th of December, numerous villages and enclosures, reaching right up to the walls, affording ample shelter in which to make the needful preparations for the attack.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Long as I had known the old man, I had never seen him give way to despondency before; but for the time he was very low! However he soon cheered up, for he was a rare, plucky old fellow." ("Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough. *Pall Mall Magazine*, March, 1899, p. 399.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 399, 400.

<sup>3</sup> A senior officer wrote from Sherpur after the relief:—"Roberts has lots of pluck and determination, and never gives way to any sort of despair, and if he only had sound judgment, he would be first-rate; but I don't think he has ever shown himself a skilful or safe general, and it is universally admitted that the Afghans might have captured Sherpur with all his supplies, stores, guns and all, had they attempted it on the 11th, 12th, or 13th, during which days he had his troops scattered over the country and only a very small force in Sherpur."

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It seemed so probable on the evening of the 14th, that the Afghans would follow up the success of the day by a night attack that every precaution possible was taken to repel one.<sup>1</sup> The walls were manned, the Behmaru Heights strongly guarded, guns being placed on their eastern and western slopes and at the gorge in their centre, and all night long two squadrons of cavalry patrolled the ground in the vicinity of the cantonment. Fortunately, the followers of the Mullah were as worn out with incessant marching and fighting as the soldiers of Baker and Macpherson, and the only incident of the night was a happy one, namely, the arrival of the Butkhak garrison after an adventurous march through country entirely in the enemy's possession.

For the moment, the Lattaband detachment had not been recalled. Believing that it was supplied with provisions and ammunition to last it till the 23rd, Roberts felt confident that the little force could temporarily hold its own;<sup>2</sup> but the following telegram, which carried to Lord Lytton some intimation of the precarious position in which he found himself, shows what steps he was taking to provide for their ultimate withdrawal:—"We have been fighting all the morning and gained great success at first, but the enemy are coming on in such numbers that I have decided to collect my force within Sherpur entrenchments, giving up heights above city and Bala Hissar, as it is not possible to hold such an extended position while the enemy are so numerous. Keeping up communication with the outposts would be very difficult. I have ordered Gough to push on from Gandamak as fast as he can, withdrawing Lattaband detachments as he passes by. As this excitement and combination are now sure

<sup>1</sup> "The situation, however, was boldly faced. That very night something was done to give the troops shelter at the more exposed points in case of attack, and to dispose them where they could most readily form and rally if the enemy had the courage to come on." (Letter of the *Times*' Correspondent, dated December 26th, 1879, published February 13th, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> The information was incorrect. The detachment was short of provisions, so short indeed that Hudson had to turn away his Hazara labourers.—H. B. H.

to spread along line of communication, I strongly recommend more troops being pushed up, so as to admit of General Bright being able to keep open communication and to enable me to clear the country, should I find it impossible to do so with my present force, which seems likely, looking to the overwhelming numbers and the great determination the enemy exhibit. Your Excellency may depend on my doing all that is possible, but I foresee that I shall not be able to do all I ought unless strongly reinforced, which should be done without delay. I have ordered Arbuthnot's Brigade from Jellalabad to Kabul immediately."<sup>1</sup>

Casualties on the 14th December were as follows :—

BRIGADIER-GENERAL DUNHAM MASSY'S BRIGADE.

*Wounded.*

Two Native Officers (one mortally)	. . .	5th Punjab Cavalry.
One Non-Commissioned Officer (mortally)	. . .	" "
Five men (mortally)	. . . . .	" "

BRIGADIER-GENERAL BAKER'S BRIGADE.

*Killed.*

Captain N. J. Spens	. . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
Lieutenant C. H. Gaisford	. . . . .	" "
One Native Officer	. . . . .	Guides Infantry.
One man	. . . . .	No. 2 Mountain Battery.
One man	. . . . .	14th Bengal Lancers.
Nine men	. . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
Two men	. . . . .	3rd Sikhs.
Twelve men	. . . . .	Guides Infantry.
One man	. . . . .	5th Punjab Infantry.

*Wounded.*

Captain F. D. Battye	. . . . .	Adjutant Guide Corps.
Captain D. F. Gordon	. . . . .	92nd Highlanders.

<sup>1</sup> Telegram despatched on the evening of the disaster

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Lieutenant G. G. A. Egerton . . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
One Native Officer . . . . .	14th Bengal Lancers.
One Native Officer . . . . .	Guides Infantry.
One Native Officer . . . . .	3rd Sikhs.
Six men . . . . .	No. 2 Mountain Battery.
Four men . . . . .	14th Bengal Lancers.
Twenty-five men . . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
Three men . . . . .	92nd Highlanders.
Twenty-six men . . . . .	Guides Infantry.
Four men . . . . .	3rd Sikhs.
Thirteen men . . . . .	5th Punjab Infantry.
Two followers (Bheesties).	

## BRIGADIER-GENERAL MACPHERSON'S BRIGADE.

### *Killed.*

Colour-Sergeant J. Yule . . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
One Native Officer . . . . .	5th Gurkhas.
One man . . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
Two men . . . . .	5th Gurkhas.

### *Wounded.*

Five men . . . . .	67th Foot.
Three men . . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
Two men . . . . .	5th Gurkhas.
One follower (Bheestie).	

## TOTAL CASUALTIES.

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Men.</i>	<i>Followers.</i>	<i>Horses.</i>
Killed . . . . .	4	30	—	2
Wounded . . . . .	8 <sup>1</sup>	93	9	10
Total . . . . .	12	123	9 <sup>2</sup>	12

<sup>1</sup> Includes the Native Officer mortally wounded.

<sup>2</sup> Includes 6 dhoolie-bearers wounded.

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. From the night of the 11th of December till the evening of the 12th it was necessary for the safety of Baker's Brigade that Macpherson should hold both the Deh-i-Masang Gorge and the Sher Darwaza Heights, but, once the former's baggage and rear-guard had got back to Sherpur, the latter's troops should have been drawn into the cantonment. Nothing was gained by keeping them longer in a very perilous position, and as it was quite dark the withdrawal would have been unopposed by, perhaps unknown to, the Afghans, who, with the exception of those holding the Takht-i-Shah, had sought shelter for the night in the city and its adjacent villages.

OBSERVATION II. The events of the 12th, 13th, and 14th of December demonstrate the truth of Roberts's remark that "while the enemy were in such numbers, nothing was gained by capturing difficult hills which were far from Sherpur."<sup>1</sup> The abortive attack on the Takht-i-Shah of the 12th and the successful assault of the 13th on the same mountain, were equally unjustifiable. For the sake of a barren success, the cantonments were denuded of troops, and two mountain guns and some hundreds of men isolated on the top of a high hill, where they could contribute nothing to the improvement of the general military situation, and were themselves a source of anxiety and weakness. Nor was the fighting on the 14th of December more necessary, for, as the enemy had no artillery, to dislodge them from the Asmai Heights was not a matter of life or death; but, if the attempt was to be made, Macpherson's troops should have been added to Baker's to lessen the chances of failure.

OBSERVATION III. "It is not by placing troops everywhere, but by making them move about, that you will guard every point."

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 183.



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(Napoleon.) These words of the great Master of the Art of War teach the tactics which should have been pursued at Kabul after the disaster of the 11th of December. Assuming all the troops to have been concentrated in Sherpur on the night of the 12th, the cavalry and horse artillery, supported by a couple of infantry regiments and the field guns, should have moved out at dawn next day and taken up a good position in the Kabul Valley, at no great distance from the cantonment—the Siah Sang Heights were well adapted for the purpose—to watch the Afghans and prevent their breaking out of the city, or descending from the hills into the plain. When so established, the cavalry, unencumbered by followers and baggage, should have “moved about,” and penetrating into every part of the valley, have rendered any formidable gathering of the tribesmen almost impossible, thus securing to the troops within the walls the time and freedom necessary for the strengthening of the fortifications and the levelling of all buildings within musketry range of the ramparts.

In the telegram in which Roberts admitted the inutility of wasting lives on capturing distant hills, he also announced the intention of adopting the “move about” tactics recommended by Napoleon;<sup>1</sup> but the intention, like the admission, came too late. Many lives had already been lost to no purpose on the Takht-i-Shah and the Asmai Heights, and their loss and the reverses attendant on it, had greatly reduced his ability to move about with success.

<sup>1</sup> “To-morrow the Force, if not attacked, will be employed in completing our defences; afterwards, shall move out daily and prevent enemy from surrounding our position.” (Telegram of the 14th December, wrongly dated 15th in Blue Books.)

## CHAPTER XXI

### Preparations for the Defence of Sherpur and for the Advance of Gough

No sooner had Baker and Macpherson re-entered Sherpur than their troops, with the exception of those needed to man the walls, were divided into working parties and told off to complete the defences of the cantonment, a task at which they laboured without intermission for forty-eight hours.

The shallow ditches connecting the six towers on the Behmaru Heights, were deepened, prolonged, and protected by abattis; the gorge which cut the ridge into two, was provided with flanking defences, so arranged as to bring a galling fire to bear on an enemy advancing from the north; and a two-gun battery was established on the eastern slope of the Heights and connected with the village of Behmaru, the walls of which, as well as some detached buildings in its vicinity, were loopholed. The big gap near that village, now deserted by its inhabitants, was fortified by ditch, earth-works, and abattis, constructed of fruit trees felled in the surrounding orchards, and the whole strengthened with wire entanglement. On the roof of the exposed Native Field Hospital, a parapet of sand bags was built up, the unfinished rampart on its flank raised by logs laid horizontally one upon another, and beyond this, again, abattis were constructed and everywhere wire entanglement was laid down. Lastly, the open space between the western end of the Behmaru Heights and the Headquarters Gate was strengthened by entrenchments, and the small

fort of Mustofi, the fire from which flanked the northern and western faces of cantonments, was held as an independent post.<sup>1</sup>

All that skill and knowledge could do to improve a defective position was done by Colonel Æ. Perkins and his able staff of engineers, to which, at their own request, the officers of the Survey Department had been attached ;<sup>2</sup> and, in addition, Sir F. Roberts had the great advantage of Sir Michael Kennedy's wide experience ; but, with all hands busy improving the defences of the cantonment, there were, at first, none to spare for the almost equally important business of razing the numerous forts and levelling the walls of the enclosures in dangerous proximity to the ramparts ; and, after the 16th of December, forts and enclosures were in the occupation of the enemy. Neither was there any possibility of reducing the area to be defended, great as was the disproportion between the cantonment and its garrison, for the Behmaru Heights covered its entire northern side and "to have given up any portion of them would," in Roberts's words, "have placed in the hands of the enemy a vantage-ground whence no part of our camp would have been secure." The problem to be solved, therefore, was how to enable a small force to do the work of a large one, and Roberts did all that commander could do to solve it satisfactorily.

The defences were divided into five sections :—

Section I.—From the 2nd Brigade Gate, on the cantonment's southern face, to the Village of Behmaru—Brigadier-General Macpherson commanding ; Staff-officer, Captain C. W. N. Guinness.

Section II.—The Behmaru Village—Colonel Jenkins commanding.

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> " Captain T. Holdich, R.E., Major R. G. Woodthorpe, R.E., and Captain E. Martin, all of the Survey Department, having expressed a wish that their services might be utilized, I placed them at the disposal of Colonel Perkins, C.B., commanding Royal Engineers, who testifies to the great assistance they afforded him, and also to the good services done by Lieutenant Scott-Moncrieff, R.E." (Ibid.)

Section III.—From the Behmaru Village to the Gorge in the Behmaru Heights—Brigadier-General Hugh Gough commanding; Staff-officer, Major H. B. Hanna.

Section IV.—From the Behmaru Gorge to Head-Quarters Gate—Major-General J. Hills commanding; Staff-officer, Captain T. Deane.

Section V.—From Head-Quarters Gate to the 2nd Brigade Gate—Lieutenant-Colonel F. Brownlow commanding.

A Reserve, formed at the foot of the Behmaru Heights, was placed under Brigadier-General Baker's command, with Captain W. C. Farwell as his staff-officer. Brigadier-General Massy with the whole of the cavalry was posted in the centre of cantonments to protect the commissariat stores—staff-officer, Lieutenant J. P. Brabazon; and to Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. A. Lockhart was assigned the duty of keeping Baker informed as to the state of affairs in each section. To leave the Horse Artillery and Field Guns free to move from point to point, several of the cannon captured from the Afghans were mounted on the ramparts under the superintendence of Major C. A. Gorham, R.A., whose technical knowledge proved of great value.<sup>1</sup> The whole garrison bivouacked at the posts allotted to them, and, for the greater part of the time, the troops were all under arms, as, by day, the Afghans took up positions in the adjacent forts and gardens, and, though they withdrew at dusk, there were constant rumours of projected night attacks. With a view to such a contingency and to guard against the danger of the troops firing into each other in the dark, the following Divisional Order was issued on the 15th of December:—"General Roberts has far too much confidence in his troops to believe that the enemy could force an entrance; but, if such a thing did happen, on no account are rifles to be used, but we must trust entirely to the bayonet."

As regards supplies, there was no fear of running short of food for man or beast, and there was ample firewood in stock, and medicines

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

and hospital comforts to meet all possible requirements; but in the use of ammunition strict economy had to be exercised, for though, later, Roberts stated that there was sufficient for guns and rifles to have carried on "an obstinate defence for three, or even four, months," his Assistant Adjutant-General, at the time, sent round a Memorandum to all commanding officers warning them that "two or three heavy actions would most seriously reduce the number of rounds available,"<sup>1</sup> a warning that tallied with Roberts's telegram of the 16th of December, in which the supply was given as "on an average about three hundred and fifty rounds per rifle," and the Government was requested to send up more ammunition both for guns and rifles without delay.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the question of ammunition there were three matters connected with the internal condition of the cantonments and the constitution of the garrison, which weighed heavily on the General and his Staff: the enormous amount of inflammable material within the walls; the fact that the two regiments which counted the largest number of Pathans in their ranks, were posted, the one at the western, the other at the eastern extremity of the Behmaru Heights,

<sup>1</sup> Extract Memo. Kabul, 15th December, 1879:—

"The Lieutenant-General wishes to impress on all the very vital necessity which exists for the most careful check being placed over the expenditure of ammunition, and in order to bring the importance of this home to all he cannot do better than inform them that the total amount of ammunition available is 320 rounds per rifle, while under the most favourable circumstances more could not reach this from Peshawar under 3 weeks. Unless the very greatest care is taken to see that no shot is fired uselessly, it is evident that two or three heavy actions would most seriously reduce the number of rounds available, while it is equally evident that our running short of ammunition would be simply disastrous.

"By order,

"(Sd.) G. DE C. MORTON, Captain,

"Assistant Adjutant-General."

<sup>2</sup> Telegram, Kabul, 16th December. From General Roberts to Viceroy:—

"We are fairly off for ammunition, on an average about 350 rounds per rifle, and strict orders have been issued to economise expenditure, but it is desirable that more ammunition, both for rifles and guns, should be sent up without delay." *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 194.



the points most exposed to attack ; and the presence in camp of a number of Afghan Sirdars. Every possible precaution was taken against an outbreak of fire, and by the expulsion of all the city people, labourers, masons, carpenters, etc., the chances of intentional incendiarism were greatly diminished ; yet no one could guarantee that some accident might not at any moment set the commissariat stores in a blaze. All that could be done to lessen the danger involved in the position held by the Native regiments most strongly leavened with the Pathan element, was to strengthen that position in each case by the addition of two companies of Highlanders ;<sup>1</sup> for the distrust that the removal of those regiments would reveal, might suggest to them the very conduct, to guard against which the change had been made.

The risks arising out of the presence in camp of Afghans whom it was impossible to expel, could only be met by cutting them off from communication with their countrymen outside, so the Mustaufi was re-arrested, and other Sirdars, who had hitherto been treated as guests, were placed in confinement, chief amongst them Daud Shah, who had retained his liberty when Yakub Khan's other Ministers were thrown into prison, because Roberts had heard nothing of importance against him, and anticipated nothing but advantage from his remaining at large.<sup>2</sup> The grounds, on which these anticipations had given place to suspicion, were weak ;<sup>3</sup> but, weak or strong, the exigencies of the situation in which the British Force now found itself, justified its General in depriving the late Afghan Commander-in-Chief of the opportunity of using to its disadvantage his exceptional power of noticing its weakness, and the many defects in its defences.

*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 185.

“Daud Shah has been put under arrest ‘as a matter of precaution,’ and the Mustaufi is also again in confinement, as well as other Afghan Sirdars, whose honesty is a doubtful quantity.” (Hensman, p. 222.)

<sup>3</sup> Macgregor, Vol. II. pp. 170, 171,

During the whole of the 15th and 16th of December, the business of remedying these defects absorbed the time and strength of the entire Force, but on the 17th the Cavalry moved out early to patrol around the walls. No enemy was discovered, but soon after their return to cantonments, large numbers of Afghans were seen collecting on the Asmai and Siah Sang Heights, and by noon at least twenty thousand tribesmen had assembled on the latter hills. Two Horse Artillery and six Field guns opened fire from the bastion at the angle of the eastern and southern walls with so accurate an aim that, notwithstanding the efforts of their mounted officers, the Afghans could not long be kept together. The great majority retired into the city, but a considerable number came down towards cantonments. The occasion was a good one for a sortie in force ; but Roberts, unwilling to run risks, abstained from availing himself of it.

The next day the Cavalry reconnoitred, and a detachment of the 5th Punjab Infantry was sent out to examine the King's Garden, while the 67th Foot, supported by the 72nd Highlanders, swept round the southern face of cantonments to dislodge any of the enemy who might have obtained a lodgment under its ramparts. At 4 o'clock all the troops were recalled ; but, after dark, the Sappers went out to level walls in the vicinity of Sherpur, which had been affording shelter to the enemy's sharpshooters.<sup>1</sup> That evening snow began to fall and continued falling all through the night. Welcome to the General as the best of safeguards against fire, it added greatly to the hardships of the troops ;<sup>2</sup> and though everything was done to mitigate those hardships by employing fewer men on the walls

<sup>1</sup> " Then Perkins came over to get an order for sappers to go out and knock down walls all round ; a thing I had suggested should be done at the very first." (Macgregor's Diary, 18th December, Vol. II. p. 164.)

<sup>2</sup> " At ten o'clock I visited the bastions held by the 72nd Highlanders, and gained some idea of the work our men are called upon to do. The sentries in their greatcoats were simply white figures standing rigidly up like ghosts, the snowflakes softly covering them from head to foot and freezing as they fell. . . .

and in the bastions, and causing hot soup and cocoa to be served out when those on night duty were relieved in the morning, it was plain that the troops could not indefinitely bear the incessant demands on their strength and vigilance imposed upon them by the inadequacy of their numbers to the work to be performed ;<sup>1</sup> and Roberts's desire for the arrival of Charles Gough and his Brigade grew stronger day by day, and was shared by every man in cantonments.

The order to that officer to advance, mentioned at the close of the last chapter, was despatched to him by telegraph on the afternoon of the 14th of December, and reached him at Jagdallak Fort about 10 p.m. It ran as follows :—"March to Kabul as soon as you can, and bring the Lattaband detachment with you. Hold on to all posts that are strong enough to resist attack ; others I should withdraw from. It is very probable the Ghilzais will rise. We have had hard fighting and have withdrawn our posts from neighbouring hills, and force is now collected at Sherpur, where we shall be more than a match for the enemy. They numbered nearly 30,000 to-day. I will look out for you on road from Butkhak, or Lattaband, if possible. Try and keep me informed of your movements."

Gough was already aware that things were going badly with Roberts, for the telegraph clerk at Jagdallak had communicated to him a number of alarming telegrams from newspaper correspondents at Sherpur, which had passed through the office on their way to India ; but the order to march to Kabul came as a surprise to a

Inside cantonments was one wide sheet of snowy brightness, the Behmaru Heights rising up in the background and looming through the snowflakes like a snowy barrier, blocking us from the outer world. It was bitterly cold on those Heights, over which a cold wind nearly always blows, and we knew that, hidden from our view, were 2,000 or 3,000 men sleeping at their posts with snow about them, every man ready to answer the first call of his officer, stalking about among the sentries." (Hensman, p. 238.)

<sup>1</sup> "This sort of thing cannot go on. . . . The troops would not last long at this rate." (Diary, 18th December, Macgregor, Vol. II. p. 164.)

commander deeply conscious of the responsibilities by which he was already burdened, and the meagreness of the military resources at his disposal. Never once since he left Peshawar had his Brigade been brought up to its authorized strength, and recently it had been weakened by calls upon it from Front and Rear—Roberts having summoned the Guides to Kabul, and General Bright having recalled the larger part of the Gandamak garrison to Jellalabad, where he was organizing a punitive expedition into the Laghman Valley. These withdrawals had left him with only six Horse Artillery and six Mountain guns, two hundred and thirty Cavalry, and fifteen hundred and forty-five Infantry, nearly half of which force was absorbed by three outposts, Pezwan eleven miles, Jagdallak Kotal twenty-one miles, and Jagdallak Fort twenty-three miles from Gandamak. To make matters worse, his Brigade was miserably equipped with transport, and as there were no commissariat cattle available, the regimental carriage had to be employed in carrying up food and stores; it was also badly off for ammunition, having only the cartridges in the men's pouches, and the first reserve carried by the regimental mules.

On the 13th of December, Gough had been directed by Bright to advance and reinforce the Pezwan and Jagdallak posts as soon as three companies of the 51st Light Infantry and the 24th Punjab Infantry, both of which regiments belonged to the leading Brigade, should reach Gandamak. They came in the same evening, and the next morning, leaving behind him the Horse Artillery guns, Gough marched with the troops set free by their arrival. At Pezwan he dropped a detachment of infantry, and continuing to advance slowly through a very hilly country, reached Jagdallak Fort only a short time before Roberts's telegram was received there. Gough telegraphed in reply that he had just arrived at Jagdallak; had only five hundred men with him; would advance as soon as he possibly could; and then turned to considering how and when that promise could be fulfilled. The more he considered, the clearer it became to him that

it would be an act of madness to attempt to fight his way with only six mountain guns and 500 Infantry—his cavalry he had decided to leave behind—through the thirty thousand Afghans who had forced Roberts and his six thousand to shut themselves up in Sherpur. He was not the man to shrink from responsibility ; but, as soon as the sun was up next day, he despatched a heliogram to Bright—the telegraph line on both sides of Jagdallak had been cut during the night—in which he frankly laid before him his own views with regard to Roberts's order and sought his advice.

“The more I think of this advance that I have been ordered to make,” so ran the message, “the more risky and injudicious I think it. Even if I take all available force, my column would be a weak one to face the odds and difficulties I should have to encounter. Roberts with six thousand men is not able to keep the field, and has withdrawn into position at Sherpur, and it seems a great risk to expect me to force my way in. If any disaster happened, it would have a very serious effect ; whilst even success would leave this line so weak that communication would be instantly cut, and there would be no news from Kabul. I cannot help thinking it would be much wiser for me to wait till reinforcements come up from the rear, and when you are able to hold these posts during an advance. Of course, I know how weak the line is all the way down ; but by pushing up regiments along the line, troops may be accumulated at the front pretty quickly. I shall not be able to advance for two or three days yet ; and the responsibility thrust upon me is so great that I should be much obliged by your opinion as to what course I ought to pursue. The wire is cut on both sides of us, so that I cannot communicate either way.”

Bright shared his subordinate's views and wrote to Roberts to that effect, at the same time directing Gough not to move pending orders, which he had requested might be sent direct to Jagdallak from Sherpur. Meantime Gough's fear that there might be no news



from Kabul was in a fair way to be realized, for the weather, which so far had been clear and bright, changed suddenly ; thick clouds obscured the sun, the heliograph ceased to work, and, thenceforward, Roberts, Gough, and Bright had to depend almost entirely, for news of each other, on disguised messengers. One such, a non-commissioned officer of the 28th Punjab Infantry, carrying a letter from Colonel Hudson, got safely into Jagdallak Fort on the 15th of December, from whom Gough learned that the detachment which he was to pick up at Lattaband, consisted of two guns and seven hundred Infantry. His own Infantry strength was brought up in the course of the day to a thousand and sixty-four by the arrival of Colonel W. Daunt, with a reinforcement. So far, however, from being in a better position to obey Roberts's summons, Gough saw himself more tied to his own immediate work than when he had heliographed to Bright ; for, in the meantime, the Ghilzais had risen, seized the hills in the vicinity of the Fort, and cut off communication with Pezwan. To clear the road and help in the provision convoys which were coming up, Gough sent out Major W. H. Macnaughten with a small body of cavalry and infantry, with which Major E. T. Thackeray, commanding at Jagdallak Kotal, was ordered to co-operate. The tribesmen were dislodged from a position south of the Kotal that they had taken up, but they quickly reassembled, and to obtain trustworthy information and get in his supplies, Gough had to keep sending out small columns from Pezwan and Jagdallak to meet half-way, exchange laden for unladen transport animals, and return to their respective posts. This state of things continued till the 18th of December, when Bright, having succeeded in releasing some of the troops in the rear, was able to send forward Colonel F. B. Norman, with two Mountain guns, a detachment of the 24th Punjab Infantry, the 2nd Gurkhas, a detachment of Sappers, and forty men of the 72nd.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Telegram of 18th December from Bright to Viceroy. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 193.

movement was opposed by the Ghilzais, but their leader, Syud Khan, was wounded, and they themselves dispersed. After bivouacking one night at Pezwan, Norman marched on to Jagdallak Fort, where his arrival brought Gough's Infantry up to a strength of seventeen hundred and fifty-two men of all ranks.<sup>1</sup>

At dawn on the 20th, the non-commissioned officer whom Gough had sent back to Lattaband again appeared in camp, conveying the following message, which Roberts had succeeded in heliographing to Hudson the preceding day:—"Order Gough to advance without delay. This order is imperative and must be obeyed. There is nothing to stop him." This peremptory order, and Hudson's reporting that his supplies, unless replenished from Sherpur, would only last till the 22nd, decided Gough to begin his march next day, though he was far from sharing Roberts's opinion that there was nothing to stop him. With all the tribes on his line of operations in revolt and an enormous gathering of Afghans between him and Sherpur, his troops would have been few for the task imposed upon them, even had he abandoned all his posts and advanced with the whole of his Brigade. Bright had been in favour of this course; but Gough could not make up his mind to cut himself off from his base and to abandon some seventy miles of country to the Ghilzais, who, set free to follow him, would certainly harass both his rear and front. Gain in numbers, too, would have been balanced by loss in time, as he could not take his cavalry on with him, and would have had to wait for the return of the infantry which must escort them to Gandamak. Bright, recognizing that the man on the spot was the better judge, had yielded to his subordinate's arguments, and when Roberts's peremptory order arrived, all the posts in advance of

<sup>1</sup> Norman seems to have made an exchange of troops on the way, for Gough in a telegram to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy only mentions having been reinforced on the 19th by the 24th Punjab Infantry. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 1, p. 193.

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Gandamak had been strongly fortified, and Gough had only to select their garrisons as under :—

## JAGDALLAK FORT.

Colonel F. B. Norman Commanding.

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Men.</i>
10th Bengal Lancers . . . . .	4	210
24th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	6	431
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	10	641

## JAGDALLAK KOTAL.

Major E. T. Thackeray Commanding.

Hazara Mountain Battery . . . . .	2 guns.	
	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Men.</i>
10th Bengal Lancers . . . . .	—	12
24th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	—	50
Sappers and Miners . . . . .	5	190
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total, 2 guns . . . . .	5	252

## PEZWAN KOTAL.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ball-Acton Commanding.

I-A Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	2 guns.	
	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Men.</i>
10th Bengal Lancers . . . . .	1	50
51st Light Infantry . . . . .	6	150
24th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	1	50
Sappers and Miners . . . . .	4	80
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total, 2 guns . . . . .	12	330

These deductions left Gough only 4 mountain guns and fourteen hundred and thirty-five officers and men for the advance to Lattaband, where he was to take up Hudson's detachment, and where he hoped to hear that Roberts was prepared to afford him the assistance promised in his original message. He had supplies—another convoy had just

come in—but the transport was so bad—plain camels and the ponies with defective pack-saddles from Southern India—that in order to carry four days' food for his own force and just what was absolutely needful for Hudson's troops, he had to cut down camp equipage and kits to the lowest scale compatible with the health of the men.

The arrangements for the forward movement were being completed when Gough received the following message, transmitted by Colonel Acton commanding at Pezwan, to whom it had been addressed by Colonel H. M. Wemyss, Bright's Chief of the Staff:—

“General Bright hears that large numbers of Ghilzais are collected in Gough's front; tell him he is on no account to risk his communication with Gandamak, or a repulse, which might have the worst effect on the whole line. He has been informed he is not to risk an advance on Kabul unless he receives most stringent orders from Roberts; but, under the circumstances now come to light, such (advance) is impossible.”

A couple of hours later, Gough received a similar message direct from Wemyss, and in the evening came another, couched in still more decided terms:—

“You are not,” so it ran, “to advance beyond Jagdallak till you get reinforcements and orders from General Bright;” whilst almost at the same moment a messenger arrived from Kabul bringing letters from Roberts urging him to advance “at all hazards.”

Between these two contradictory orders Gough's choice was soon made. He had taken, as he hoped, satisfactory precautions against an interruption of his communications, and he decided to march, with a handful of ill-equipped men, for Lattaband, where Roberts had promised to reinforce him, meanwhile trusting to his own generalship and to the courage and discipline of his troops to avert disaster. Probably no officer, aware of Hudson's perilous position and believing that Roberts was in need of immediate assistance, would have come to a different decision; nevertheless, Bright's

heliograms were justified by the circumstances in which he found himself placed. Not without reluctance had he obeyed Roberts's order of the 7th of December to send up the Guides to Kabul—it was no easy matter to find troops to replace them in the advanced posts in the heart of the Ghilzai country—and when, on the 11th, he received directions to reinforce the garrison of Gandamak with a view to the possibility of Gough's Brigade being needed at Sherpur, he applied for help to Major-General J. Ross, who had succeeded to the command at Peshawar, *vice* General C. C. Ross invalided; and, but for the cutting of his telegraph line, would have referred Roberts's order to the Commander-in-Chief. Fortunately by the 14th, when Roberts called upon him to despatch Gough's and Arbuthnot's Brigades, the telegraph had been restored, and he was able to lay before Sir Frederick Haines a statement of the condition to which he would be reduced, if he responded to the call, and to urge him to send up a strong Division of all arms before allowing Arbuthnot's Brigade to leave Jellalabad.

It was not the Commander-in-Chief's fault that when reinforcements were so urgently needed by the General responsible for the line of communications, there were none to give him. As early as October, he had represented to Government the desirability of forming reserves at Rawal Pindi and Peshawar to meet just such a contingency as had now arisen; but the Government, confident that the various columns operating beyond the frontier were strong enough to crush any opposition they were likely to encounter, and aware that the Supply and Transport Department had great difficulty in meeting the demands made upon it by the troops at the front, could not be persuaded to do more than agree to warning for service the corps that might be needed as a reserve, and maintaining at Jhelam—the railhead—sufficient transport for their needs. Sir F. Haines returned to the charge only to be told that, as the Peshawar authorities were unable to furnish supplies, no troops could be moved up beyond



Jhelam ; and so matters remained till the news of the great unrest prevailing in the country around Kabul opened the Government's eyes to the probability that Roberts's column might not prove strong enough to defeat the combination that was being formed against it. Then, at last, the Commander-in-Chief was allowed to order the under-named troops to be ready to move at a moment's notice :—

D-A Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	Peshawar.
I-C Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	Rawal Pindi.
D-4 Royal Artillery . . . . .	Rawal Pindi.
4th Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	Mian Mir.
11th Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	Nowshera.
300 Sabres 17th Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	Peshawar.

The notice itself was given on the 14th, as soon as the telegram announcing Baker's defeat and the retirement of the whole of Roberts's force into Sherpur was received ; all the designated corps not already at Peshawar being directed to proceed thither without delay. The same evening, the 8th Hussars at Mattra were ordered to Hassan Abdal, and the 1st Gurkhas at Dharmasala, and all the effective men of the 2nd Gurkhas at Dehra, and those of the 4th Gurkhas at Bukloh, to Peshawar.

A step in the right direction had been taken, but Sir F. Haines, knowing the weakness of Bright's Force—numbering only twelve thousand and sixty-nine men at the beginning, it had now been reduced to nine thousand four hundred and forty-two—was urgent with the Government to go farther and permit him to assemble a Reserve Division at Peshawar to consist of the following troops :—

#### CAVALRY BRIGADE.

E-A Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	Major A. W. W. Murdock.
8th Hussars . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Chaplin, V.C.
5th Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	Major H. A. Shakespeare.

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### 1ST INFANTRY BRIGADE.

1-5th Fusiliers	.	.	.	Colonel T. Roland.
1st Gurkhas	.	.	.	Lieutenant-Colonel P. Story.
32nd Pioneers	.	.	.	Major A. C. W. Crookshank.

### 2ND BRIGADE.

2-14th Foot	.	.	.	Lieutenant-Colonel D. S. Warren.
1-18th Foot	.	.	.	Lieutenant-Colonel M. J. R. Macgregor.
1st Regiment Hyderabad Contingent.				

### 3RD BRIGADE.

2 Regiments of Madras Infantry.

### DIVISIONAL CORPS.

The Deoli Regiment.

The proposal was submitted to the Government on the 16th of December, and on the 21st the Viceroy sanctioned the formation of a Reserve Division, and nominated Major-General J. Ross to its command.

## CHAPTER XXII

### Raising of the Siege of Sherpur

UP to the 21st of December, the day when Gough began his march, the only variety in the life of the beleaguered garrison was a successful sortie made by Baker with two mountain guns and eight hundred infantry in which he captured and destroyed Killa Mir Akhor, a fortified village lying to the east of Sherpur. Every morning the Afghans swarmed out of Kabul and the surrounding villages to take up positions in the numerous forts and enclosures within range of the walls; all through each day, their bullets fell thick and fast into the heart of the cantonment, compelling men and animals to keep well under shelter of the ramparts; and every evening they withdrew to their sleeping places, apparently content with having inflicted a few casualties and a large amount of worry upon the besieged, who, on their part, kept quiet, never firing a shot unless certain that it would reach its mark.<sup>1</sup> There were constant rumours of projected night attacks, but night after night went by without one, and, for a time, it seemed as if the belligerents were engaged in a waiting game, each hoping to exhaust the resources and wear out the spirit of the other. News pointing to an eventual break-up of the combination which had driven Roberts's troops from the field,

<sup>1</sup> "Our men do not answer the fire, except when certain of their aim, as one rifle discharged from the walls is the signal for twenty answering shots. The bullets go wide of their mark and drop into cantonments, doing some damage." (Hensman, p. 241.)

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was brought in by spies ; there were dissensions in the Afghan camp as to the future ruler of the country, the Ghilzai and Wardak tribes desiring the restoration of Yakub Khan, whilst the Kohistanis were in favour of placing Wali Mahomed on the throne of Kabul ; but the two factions were united in their determination to rid themselves, once and for all, of their invaders, and so confident of their ability to do this that terms of capitulation were drawn up by Mahomed Jan and sent to the British General. Roberts's telegrams and despatches are silent as to this incident, but Hensman, who was kept well informed as to all that went on at Head-Quarters, is positive as to its having occurred, and mentions the withdrawal of all British troops from Afghanistan, the restoration of Yakub Khan, and the surrender of two British officers of high rank as hostages for the due fulfilment of the convention, as the conditions on which the force in Sherpur was to be allowed to return to India.<sup>1</sup>

The most hopeful feature of the outlook viewed from the British standpoint, was the certainty that the vast concourse of Afghans concentrated around Sherpur must some day break up ; but no one could foretell the exact length of time it would hold together, and, meanwhile, the garrison's own fighting strength was so steadily declining that, unless the expected reinforcements came in quickly, their arrival would do little to alter the original disproportion between besiegers and besieged. It was with this prospect staring him in the face that, on the 19th of December, Roberts took advantage of a passing gleam of sunshine to send Gough, through Hudson, the order to march at once to the relief of Sherpur. Peremptory as was this order, the General, knowing well that its execution must depend upon circumstances over which he could exercise no control, dared not trust to the chance of Gough's reaching Lattaband before Hudson's supply of provisions was exhausted ; yet how to

<sup>1</sup> Hensman, p. 245.

replenish it from his own stores was a matter of great perplexity to him, for a small army would have been needed to fight a convoy through the swarming Afghan hordes, and he had not a man to spare from the defence of the cantonment. The difficulty was solved in an unexpected manner. Some Hazaras, who had been employed in getting the place into a fit state for winter occupation, volunteered for the perilous undertaking;<sup>1</sup> though not Afghans, they were dwellers in Kabul, knew the surrounding country well, and believed that, by starting at night and making a long *détour*, it would be possible to escape detection. The event only partially justified their confidence. To facilitate the movement, the convoy was broken up into two bodies, one leaving Sherpur on the night of the 19th, the other on the 20th.<sup>2</sup> The first got safely through to Lattaband; the second, consisting of 60 pack animals, fell into the enemy's hands, and all the brave men in charge of it were believed to have been killed.<sup>3</sup>

On the 20th of December, three 18-pounders and an 8-inch howitzer belonging to the siege train presented to Shere Ali by the Indian Government, were mounted on the bastions east and west of the 72nd Highlanders' Gateway, and at 9 o'clock the next morning, they opened fire, with very little result, on Killa Mahomed Sharif, a fort which had been a source of great annoyance to the garrison.<sup>4</sup> Undeterred by the heavy cannonade, the Afghans assumed so threatening an attitude that in the afternoon all the troops got under

<sup>1</sup> "The Hazaras are very plucky. They go out willingly for a small reward, and we are now using a few of them to carry letters and despatches." (Hensman, p. 243.)

<sup>2</sup> "Another will be sent out to-night; but as parties of the enemy have been seen taking the road to Butkhak, it is not unlikely that it will be intercepted." (Ibid. p. 243.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 249. A fate anticipated by Hensman; see preceding note.—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> "From this fort, which is only 700 yards from the 72nd Gateway, men fired at the southern wall all day, while others could be seen, with rifles hung



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arms, but once again their courage seemed to fail them, and at dusk they withdrew to the city.

The heliogram announcing Charles Gough's departure from Jagdallak and his hope to be at Sherpur on the 24th, arrived that day; and, on receipt of it, Roberts ordered Hudson to move to Butkhak, and at 3 o'clock on the morning of the 22nd, sent out two squadrons of the 12th Bengal Cavalry, under Major J. H. Green, to try to join him there.<sup>1</sup>

On the 22nd, the Afghans, moving out of Kabul in larger bodies than had hitherto been the case, occupied all the forts to the east of Sherpur, and there were unmistakeable signs that the final struggle was close at hand. Fortunately for the garrison, Roberts was soon in possession of Mahomed Jan's plans. Spies brought in news that very early next morning, the last day of the Maharram, scaling parties, well supplied with ladders, were to make a demonstration against the cantonments' southern and western faces from Mahomed Sharif's fort and the King's Garden; but the real assault was to be directed against the village of Behmaru and the gap in the eastern wall, and only when that had proved successful was the feigned attack to be converted into a real attempt to scale the rampart near the 72nd Highlanders' Gate. The signal for the attack was to be a beacon fire on the Asmai Hills, lighted by Mushk-i-Alam's own hands.

Before evening, commanding officers had been warned of what was likely to happen; and next day, the 23rd of December, an

across their backs superintending the carrying away of the *bhusa* stored by the 5th Punjab Cavalry, in a village near for winter consumption." (Hensman, p. 243.)

Mahomed Sharif stood near the site of the old Cantonment, and came prominently to notice in the disastrous winter of 1841. (See, *Kaye's First Afghan War*, Vol. II. p. 269.)—H. B. H.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from Diary for December 21st:—"Telegraphed to Hudson to come to Butkhak to-morrow, and arranged for Green to go out during the night to try and join him." (Macgregor, Vol. II. p. 166.)

hour before dawn, the troops silently fell in under arms and took up the positions assigned to them in their various sections. In strained expectation, confident of ultimate victory, yet conscious that a life-and-death struggle lay before him, every man's eyes were turned towards the east, watching for the predicted signal; yet when it came, so brilliant, so dazzling was the light that burst forth from the Asmai Heights that, for an instant, men's hearts stood still with astonishment and awe. All saw that light and some fragment of the scene revealed by it, but the watchers on the Behmaru ridge saw all that it disclosed, and never did soldiers gaze upon a more glorious, a more terrible spectacle. At their feet—every nook and corner of the vast enclosure, every defensive work, every group of defenders, clearly visible—lay the cantonments, and beyond, across the snow-clad valley, dotted with villages and forts, every seam and rock on the rugged, precipitous Asmai Heights shone out as if traced by a pencil of fire, and on those heights, their figures dark against the snow below and the light above, men—watchers and waiters like those who now beheld them—were just starting into fierce motion, ready to throw away their lives in the endeavour to break through the obstacles that lay between them and their hated foe.

Three minutes at most that light lasted; then it died down as suddenly as it had flashed upwards; but the darkness that followed was of short duration, for out of it, as the scaling parties advanced to the feigned attack, a heavy musketry fire burst forth, and at the same time the British guns on the Behmaru Heights began throwing star shells into the dense masses of the enemy, who, led by Ghazis, were now issuing from their places of concealment and pouring across the plain; each shell, as it flew, lighting up hundreds of fierce, eager faces. Darkness faded into dawn and dawn into sunlight, and the terrible beauty of a night assault gave place to the hideous horrors of a battle by day; but still the vast mob rushed on, wave after wave, filling the air with deafening cries of *Allah-il-Allah*, as

they hurled themselves upon the defences. But the Engineers had done their work too well. Up to the 15th of December, such courage as animated those ill-armed hordes would have carried them into the heart of Sherpur; but, now, with only their naked hands to tear down the obstructions which barred their advance, though their officers rode constantly backwards and forwards encouraging them to fresh efforts, though numbers died to clear a way for those behind them, not one succeeded in getting within the walls. Again and again, those who sought to carry the Behmaru village recoiled before the withering fire from the mountain guns, and the rifles of the Guides and 92nd Highlanders; again and again, those who strove to escalate the eastern wall were swept down by the steadily reserved fire of the 67th Foot; yet still their numbers seemed to grow and their courage gave no signs of waning.

About 9 o'clock, three hours after the beginning of the struggle, the Afghans gained a firm lodgment in a small village lying dangerously near the eastern end of the Heights, and Hugh Gough telegraphed to Head-Quarters for reinforcements. Macgregor could only telegraph back the order "to hold on"; for on all sides the garrison was now hotly engaged, and though the captured Afghan cannon made huge gaps in the yelling crowds pressing forward to the assault, the Afghans, abandoning all mere demonstrations, were making one attempt after another to escalate the southern wall. A little later, however, Baker was able to spare a few troops from the Reserve to the hard-pressed men on the Heights, and Hills, commanding Section IV., sent up a wing of the 3rd Sikhs.

At 10 o'clock there was a slight lull in the hitherto almost continuous fighting, and when at 11 o'clock, the Afghans returned to the charge their assaults were marked by less determination than before; nevertheless, they kept a firm hold on the village they had captured till Roberts, recognizing that it was impossible to dislodge them from it by any fire that could be brought to bear upon them

from the defences, resolved to try a flank attack, and ordered 4 guns G-3 Royal Artillery, commanded by Major W. R. Craster, and the 5th Punjab Cavalry, commanded by Major B. Williams, to move out through the Gorge into the plain lying to the north of the Behmaru Heights. The movement had hardly begun when the Ghazis were seen to be deserting the village, and it was discovered that the Kohistanis, who ought to have protected them against a flank attack, had abandoned their position near the eastern end of the Behmaru Heights and were already far on their way to their own country.

Not a moment was lost in taking advantage of this weakening of the enemy. Issuing from cantonments by the Behmaru Gorge, with every available man and horse, Brigadier-General Massy hurried after Williams, but before he could overtake him the Kohistani contingent, numbering five thousand fighting men, many of them accompanied by wives and sisters come out to witness their triumph, had escaped into the hills. There was nothing to be done in that quarter, so hearing that Baker with the Sappers and Miners, two guns and two companies of the 92nd and the 3rd Sikhs, had followed him through the Gorge and was preparing to attack the Afghans in the villages to the east and south-east of cantonments, Massy made his dispositions to cut off the enemy's retreat. The 14th Bengal Lancers he sent to block the pass leading into Kohistan, the Guides Cavalry to guard the road leading to Butkhak, and the 5th Punjab Cavalry and the 9th Lancers to hold the road leading to the city. Several villages were destroyed by Baker's force; the 67th Foot burned others and cleared the enemy out of Rikabashi Fort close to the south-east bastion; and a party of the 5th Punjab Infantry, led by Subadar Juma, captured Killa Mahomed Sharif, but retired from it by Roberts's order. Out of each village as it was stormed, crowds of Afghans dashed into the open and rushed southwards towards the city to find the men of the 9th Lancers and

the 5th Punjab Cavalry, dismounted, barring their retreat.<sup>1</sup> Many fell under the fire of their carbines, but evening was closing in, and Baker, leaving the completion of his work of destruction to the morrow, was about to withdraw into cantonments, so Massy collected his scattered squadrons and followed the infantry back to camp, where each corps returned to its own section.

That night every man in Sherpur knew that the siege was at an end; for though, at the south-east corner of the cantonments where, barely two hundred and fifty yards from the ramparts, three standards had been set up, the enemy still held on to gardens and enclosures, from behind whose loopholed walls their fire had covered the retreat of their friends, no second effort to capture the place need be looked for. The tribes had staked their all on one cast and lost, and with the frustration of the hope which had held them together, their combination had ceased to exist. An armed people would still possess the land, biding their time and waiting for a new leader; but, for the moment, the British troops had won a right to as many square miles of Afghanistan as they could occupy, and her capital must fall back into their hands. Deep as must have been the disappointment that filled the hearts of Ghilzai and Wardaki, Kohistani and Logari, as, spreading far and wide over hill and valley, they withdrew that night to their homes, no sense of shame can have added to its sting. All that men could do to achieve victory, they had done. For seven hours, without a single cannon to cover their advance and batter down the strong defences of the cantonment, they had hurled themselves upon the abattis

<sup>1</sup> "The main body of the enemy had got well away to the city, but all stragglers were hunted down in the nullahs in which they took shelter, and then despatched. Two or three lancers or sowars were told off to each straggler, and the men, dismounting, used their carbines when the unlucky Afghan had been hemmed in." (Hensman, pp. 254, 255.)

Such methods of warfare recall the Mutiny days, when no quarter was given.—  
H. B. H.



protecting its walls, and under a murderous fire had tugged and torn at the tough telegraph wires which bound the heavy logs together. Great heaps of dead, marking the points where their attacks had been fiercest and longest, testified to the heroic spirit by which they were inspired. Roberts reckoned that they lost three thousand men in the assault, and the estimate is probably not exaggerated. They failed, not from lack of courage and determination, but because the task they had set themselves was an impossible one for half-armed, in many cases unarmed, men. The defences of Sherpur once completed, the besiegers' only chance of success lay in continuing as they had begun, constantly threatening but never attacking. Such tactics must, slowly but surely, have exhausted the garrison's stock of ammunition and reduced its numbers by undermining its health; but the approach of Gough rendered the continuance of a waiting policy impossible, and the result was the splendid, but useless, attempt to take Sherpur by storm.

The defence was worthy of the attack. British and Native troops vied with each other in coolness and courage; and though, covered by the ramparts or hidden in trenches, the risks they ran were comparatively small, they were still great enough, for wherever a soldier's head showed above the parapet, a skilled marksman was on the watch to make it his target, and whenever a man rose out of a trench, he was saluted by a shower of bullets. Brigadier-General Hugh Gough himself was struck down when, for a moment, he stood up to catch a glimpse of what was going on at the foot of the Heights, and fell backwards into the ditch, apparently dead. Luckily the bullet that knocked him over was half spent and could not penetrate the heavy poshteen that he wore over his uniform, and a little rum administered by his staff-officer, who had been standing beside him when he fell, quickly brought him round. A good many men, too, were killed or wounded by bullets that flew curving over the defences and dropped among the troops sheltering

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behind them. The annexed table gives all the casualties that occurred during the siege. It is impossible to say how many of them should be set down to the fighting on the 23rd, but certainly the greater part.

## CASUALTIES FROM 15TH TO 23RD DECEMBER INCLUSIVE

### *Killed.*

Captain J. Dundas, V.C.	. . .	Royal Engineers.
Lieutenant C. Nugent	. . .	"
One man	. . .	G-3 Royal Artillery.
One man	. . .	No. 2 Mountain Battery.
Five men	. . .	12th Bengal Cavalry.
One man	. . .	92nd Highlanders.
One man	. . .	5th Punjab Infantry.
Seven followers.		

### *Wounded.*

Brigadier-General Hugh Gough, V.C., C.B., Commanding Section III.

Lieutenant C. A. Montanaro	. . .	Royal Artillery (mortally). <sup>1</sup>
" J. Burn-Murdock	. . .	Royal Engineers.
" C. F. Gambier	. . .	5th Punjab Cavalry.
" L. Sunderland	. . .	72nd Highlanders.
One Native Officer	. . .	5th Punjab Cavalry.
One Native Officer	. . .	Guide Corps.
One man	. . .	F-A Royal Horse Artillery.
One man	. . .	No. 1 Mountain Battery.
One man	. . .	9th Lancers.
Four men	. . .	12th Bengal Cavalry.
Six men (one mortally)	. . .	5th Punjab Cavalry.
Nine men	. . .	67th Foot.
One man	. . .	72nd Highlanders.
One man	. . .	92nd Highlanders.
One man	. . .	23rd Pioneers.
One man	. . .	28th Punjab Infantry.
Two men	. . .	Corps of Guides.
Eight men	. . .	5th Punjab Infantry
Three men	. . .	3rd Sikhs.
Twenty-two followers.		

<sup>1</sup> "Lieutenant C. A. Montanaro, R.A., died on the 20th of a wound received the previous day. This promising young officer's gallantry in standing to his guns to the last on the 14th December I have before mentioned." (Roberts's Despatch.)

## TOTAL CASUALTIES.

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Men.</i>	<i>Followers.</i>	<i>Horses.</i>
Killed . . . .	2	9	7	7
Wounded . . . .	7	39	22	30
	<hr/> 9	<hr/> 48	<hr/> 29	<hr/> 37

The Engineer officers, Captain J. Dundas and Lieutenant C. Nugent, lost their lives by the untimely explosion of a mine they were laying; and Lieutenant Burn-Murdock was wounded by a volley from a fort whilst engaged in the same dangerous work, and would have been killed had not his companion, Lieutenant P. T. Buston, rushed forward and, laying a bag of powder against the gate, blown up the place.

The defence was greatly facilitated by the telegraph line erected by Mr. Luke and Mr. Kirke of the Telegraph Department,<sup>1</sup> which ran all round the cantonment, keeping each section in touch with the others, and all in constant communication with Head-Quarters Gate, from which point Roberts directed every movement till, at one o'clock, after despatching Massy with the cavalry to do his utmost against the enemy, he proceeded to the Behmaru Heights to arrange for the occupation of the village just deserted by the Ghazis, and to send out Baker to destroy as many forts and villages as there would be time to capture before nightfall.

## OBSERVATION

Had Mahomed Jan commanded the services of a skilful Military Engineer, he would probably have been able to capture Sherpur

<sup>1</sup> "P. S. V. Luke, Esq., C.I.E., and H. A. Kirke, Esq., of the Government Telegraph Department, have worked well and assisted me greatly by rapidly constructing a telegraph line, which placed Head-Quarters in direct communication with the Sectional Commands." (Roberts's Despatch.)

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even after the completion of its defences ; for, with the unlimited labour at the disposal of such an Engineer, the place could quickly have been approached by parallels and zigzags, the walls mined and blown up at a number of points ; and the whole length of the ramparts, unprotected as they were by traverses, enfiladed by a flanking fire from earthworks thrown up, under cover of darkness, within musketry range of the cantonment.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### March of Charles Gough's Brigade

#### DISTURBANCES ON THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION

EARLY on the morning of the 24th of December, Ressaldar Nakshband Khan reported that the thousands of tribesmen, who the previous evening had still held on to Kabul, the Bala Hissar, and many surrounding villages, had fled during the night. The news brought inexpressible relief to Sir F. Roberts,<sup>1</sup> who, not daring to hope for so sudden and complete a deliverance from his troubles, had been anxiously considering with his Chief of the Staff how best to improve yesterday's successes.<sup>2</sup> In the hope of inflicting further losses on the enemy he now ordered the cavalry to go in pursuit

<sup>1</sup> "The relief I felt when I had gathered my force inside the walls of Sherpur on the evening of the 14th of December, was small compared to that which I experienced on the morning of the 24th, when I realized that not only had the assault been abandoned, but that the great tribal combination had dissolved, and that not a man of the many thousands who had been opposed to us the previous day, remained in any of the villages, or on the surrounding hills." (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 306.)

<sup>2</sup> "Had a long talk with the General, and he is going to send Baker out with the 67th, 3rd Sikhs, Guides and Pioneers to cover Gough getting in here. If we can manage to clear them out of the city and Bala Hissar, it will be grand. . . . Roberts's idea is to storm the Bala Hissar either to-morrow or next day with C. Gough's troops. I think this is very risky, as the Bala Hissar is very strong indeed to an assault: the walls are too high to escalate, and as the only way in is by the gate, which may be strongly retrenched inside; and if these fellows are determined, they may, being so numerous, beat us off, then we shall be in a worse hat than before. Altogether the look-out is somewhat gloomy." (Macgregor, Vol. II., Diary 23rd December, pp. 168, 169.)



—one column under Hugh Gough by the Nanachi Pass into the Chardeh, another under Massy, by the Sang-i-Nawishta Defile, into the Charasiab Valley; but the fugitives were already out of reach, and a blinding snowstorm, which hid all traces of their flight, so hampered and exhausted the pursuers that night had fallen before they got back to Sherpur, the men leading their horses, which, with the snow balling in their hoofs, could hardly keep their footing on the slippery ground.<sup>1</sup> They had started early, but earlier still, Charles Gough had marched into Sherpur, bringing with him the garrison of Lattaband and the 12th Bengal Cavalry, the regiment which, led by Green, had gone out during the night of the 21st to meet Hudson at Butkhak.

Perhaps no portion of the Force that had accompanied Sir F. Roberts to Kabul had gone through a worse experience than the garrison of Lattaband. It had had little fighting and no losses in the field; for, on the one occasion when it had driven a gathering of tribesmen from the hills overlooking the camp, there had been no casualties, thanks to the skilful way in which the attacking column had been covered by artillery and rifle fire; but, for eleven days, it had been completely isolated, and, in that isolation, as ignorant of the possibilities of deliverance reaching it from outside as it was powerless to free itself from its perilous position. Such uncertainty would have been trying enough to troops well supplied with food, in a genial climate, but it must have been doubly so to men on half-rations, conscious that even these must come to an end, encamped amidst snow, on the summit of a pass, with outposts on the still higher hills by which that pass was commanded, and much sickness was the natural result of semi-starvation, exposure, and

<sup>1</sup> "Massy went out with the 9th Lancers and 5th Punjab Cavalry by the Ben-i-Hissar road, and Gough with the 14th Lancers and Guides. They found no one, and had an awful day of it, cavalry being no use whatever." (*Ibid.* Vol. II. p. 169.)

anxiety. The transport animals and their drivers had suffered even more than the troops from cold and hunger; so greatly, indeed, had their numbers dwindled that, to obey the heliogram ordering him to move to Butkhak independently of Gough, Hudson would have been obliged to abandon the greater part of his baggage and stores. This he was not prepared to do, and in consequence Green's men had a most dangerous and exhausting ride. Slipping out of Sherpur during the night of the 21st and avoiding as far as possible forts and villages, the 12th Bengal Cavalry reached the Logar Bridge without adventure to find it in the enemy's hands and well guarded. Leaving the road, they struck the river lower down, at a point where the channel was fairly shallow, but the banks on either shore steep and high. It took the regiment a couple of hours to cross the ford, and in the operation two men were drowned and ten lost their horses and had to make their way back to Sherpur as best they could.<sup>1</sup> The others were all wet to the skin, for many had slipped back in attempting to climb the slippery bank on the river's further side, and the rear squadron had actually dismounted in the half-frozen water and crawled to the top, dragging their horses after them.<sup>2</sup> Chilled to the bone, they rode cautiously forward, but the enemy was awake and watchful, and they were fired on from every village that they passed. So long as darkness protected them they had little to fear from random shots; but day dawned as they approached Butkhak, revealing, not the friends whom they had hoped to find there, but hundreds of Afghans, pouring out of the village to attack them. A hastily dismounted squadron checked their onrush, but the relief was only momentary, and Green seemed to have only the choice between a desperate attempt to break through the enemy or an equally desperate attempt to get back to Sherpur, when one of his Native

<sup>1</sup> "Twelve men were missing, but ten have since reported themselves at Sherpur." (Hensman, p. 250.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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officers, born and bred in the district, came forward with a proposal to lead the regiment by the Kabul River to Lattaband. Green gladly accepted the offer, and, under Ressaldar Bahawlddeen Khan's guidance, the 12th Bengal Cavalry joined Hudson's force that afternoon, having lost only three men killed and three wounded by the way.

Gough had started from Jagdallak to march to the relief of Sherpur, with the following troops :—

### STAFF.

Lieutenant F. H. R. Drummond,	Orderly Officer.
Major A. A. A. Kinlock	. Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.
Major M. G. Gerard	. . Brigade Major.
Major H. T. Hallowes	. . Brigade Transport Officer.
Surgeon-Major T. Walsh	. . Army Medical Department.

### ARTILLERY.

4 Guns Hazara Mountain Battery, Captain A. Broadfoot.

### CAVALRY.

	Officers.	Men.
Detachment 10th Bengal Lancers—Captain S. D. Barrow	1	25
2-9th Foot—Lieutenant-Colonel W. Daunt . . . . .	16	483
Detachment 72nd Highlanders . . . . .	1	45
2nd and 4th Gurkhas—Major A. Battye . . . . .	12	776
No. 5 Company Sappers and Miners—Lieut. E. S. Hill . .	3	73
	<hr/> 33	<hr/> 1,402

Thirty-three officers and fourteen hundred men was a small force with which to face the unknown dangers that lay before him; but, at least, it was efficient, for all the sick and weak had been left behind. Unluckily, there had been no possibility of applying the same weeding process to the transport. A committee of officers appointed to inquire into its condition, had reported that at least 25 per cent. of the Dekkan ponies were unfit for work; and the remaining 75 per cent., small, weak, badly equipped, were ill adapted

to military purposes ; but no other transport was procurable, so every creature that could stand up to receive its load, had to stagger on as far as its strength could carry it. In many cases this could not be far, so Gough issued instructions as to the course to be pursued when the inevitable breakdown occurred. Tents were first to be sacrificed, as food and ammunition must go forward at all costs. That the Afghans might reap no profit from his losses, he further directed that everything that had to be abandoned should be destroyed. Most of the transport animals survived the first day's march ; but between Seh Baba and Lattaband many animals lay down to die, and many ponies lost their loads. The readjustment and destruction of baggage consequent on these losses caused endless delays, and not till eleven at night did the rear-guard get into camp. Subsequently, the Military Department severely criticized the great loss of transport that had marked the four days' march from Jagdallak to Sherpur, and blamed Gough for destroying Government property ; but the Commander-in-Chief, having regard to the condition of Gough's transport, was of opinion that, instead of blame, he deserved high praise for having carried through a difficult operation with such miserable material, and declared that both the circumstances of the case and military precedent justified him in destroying whatever he could not take on with him. A great part of the destruction of tents complained of by the Military Department, took place at Lattaband, and was due to the necessity of transferring to Hudson every camel and pony that Gough could spare.

Early on the morning of the 23rd of December, the Jagdallak column, reinforced by the 12th Bengal Cavalry and the garrison of Lattaband, broke up camp, and began to move slowly down the pass. It was an enemy's country through which it was to advance, so Gough, besides providing small detachments to look after the baggage, detailed a whole regiment to act as rear-guard, thus greatly

reducing his fighting strength in front ; but, neither in front nor in rear, were there any intimations of the presence of the enemy ; only the sound of heavy firing from the direction of Kabul told of conflict and danger, and that sound, cut off by intervening hills, died away as the troops descended the pass. Butkhak was deserted when the Cavalry rode into it, at 11 a.m. ; all the men were away, fighting at Sherpur, and the women and children had fled as soon as the strange horsemen came into sight. From this village Gough heliographed to Roberts :—"Have arrived at Butkhak. Solicit orders." The message was acknowledged, but no orders followed, so, after a while, Gough heliographed again :—"Will advance to Logar Bridge and take your orders there." This heliogram also was acknowledged, and after a short interval came another flash, but the anxiously expected message had got no further than "Colonel Macgregor to General Gough," when clouds blotted out the sun, to the bitter disappointment of Gough, who was standing beside the man in charge of the signalling instrument. The aspect of the sky gave no hope of a renewal of communication with the cantonment, so the relieving force marched on as ignorant of what might be in store for it as when it left Lattaband. Two hours later, the Cavalry approached the Logar Bridge, which proved to be intact and empty of defenders, though barricades and shelter trenches bore testimony to the intention of disputing the British advance. The bridge was only six miles from Sherpur, but between the two rose the Siah Sang Heights, a screen which neither eye nor ear could penetrate. The utter silence, the absence of all life, were terrible to men who divined the tumult and clamour of battle close at hand ; but although Gough sent out Major Gerard to reconnoitre towards Kabul, he returned without having seen anything of friend or foe.

The main body had halted a mile short of the river to allow the baggage animals and rear-guard to close up. These, as usual, were far behind, and when, after sunset, the latter marched in, it



was too late for Gough to take the initiative on his own responsibility. His anxiety as to the fate of the Sherpur garrison, however, was relieved between ten and eleven o'clock at night, when a messenger stole into camp, bringing a letter from the Chief of the Staff. There had been heavy fighting, so Macgregor wrote, and the city, citadel, and many villages were still in the enemy's hands. Gough was therefore to make his way into cantonments as early as possible next morning, by the road running along the eastern side of the Siah Sang Heights. It snowed heavily in the night; it was still snowing when the bugle sounded the reveillé, and all landmarks were blotted out by a dense fog. Feeling their way through the blinding storm round the base of the Siah Sang Heights, Gough's troops moved slowly forward through a silent and deserted world, till, about a mile from Sherpur, they fell in with the scouts of the 9th Lancers, and were met close to the walls by Roberts and a part of Macpherson's Brigade. They had marched from Jagdallak to Kabul without seeing a single hostile tribesman, or hearing the sound of a single hostile shot; yet never had Commander accepted greater risks and deserved more gratitude from those for whom he was willing to run them than Charles Gough; and, certainly, none ever received less. Sir F. Roberts's original Despatch contained no recognition of the great courage displayed by his subordinate in marching to his assistance with a force so small that Jan Mahomed's hosts might easily have annihilated it; and even in a supplementary Despatch, written nine days later, he dismissed the whole difficult and important movement in a few cold words:—"I have much pleasure in tendering to him (Gough) my thanks for the manner in which the operation entrusted to him was carried out." The Commander-in-Chief, an impartial and experienced judge, formed a much fairer estimate of the service rendered by Gough and his men, and took care to impress his views upon the Government. "In submitting these papers" (the Kabul Despatches), so he wrote, "Sir Frederick Haines wishes

to record his high appreciation of the very able and satisfactory manner in which Brigadier-General Gough conducted this extremely difficult operation, and his Excellency feels sure that the Government of India will be satisfied that the conduct of the troops, British and Native, was all that could be desired."

The Ghilzais' failure to harass Gough's march was certainly not due to inertia or love of peace, for hardly had the British Commander begun his advance before Asmatullah Khan summoned his clansmen to his standard. Three thousand answered to the call, and with these, on the 23rd of December, accompanied by Faiz Mahomed, late commanding at Ali Masjid, and Mahomed Hussan Khan, Ex-Governor of Jellalabad, he attacked the British post on the Jagdallak Kotal. One assault succeeded the other from two o'clock in the afternoon till ten at night, in one of which Major E. T. Thackeray, V.C., the officer commanding, was severely wounded; but the place had been so strongly fortified by the Sappers and Miners, who formed the larger part of the garrison, that, in the end, the Ghilzais had to withdraw discomfited. The news of the attack had reached the posts on either side the Kotal, and next morning Colonel Norman arrived from Jagdallak Fort, and when, after reinforcing the garrison, he continued his march, he was met by Lieutenant-Colonel Ball-Acton, hurrying with a small force from Pezwan to Major Thackeray's assistance. After a short halt, each column retraced its steps; Ball-Acton re-entered Pezwan unopposed, but Norman found the enemy blocking his road, and, in brushing them away, had two men killed and three wounded.

On the 29th of December, the Jagdallak posts were again threatened, but Norman, reinforced by Ball-Acton, repulsed his assailants. On this occasion, Lieutenant I. D. Wright, Royal Artillery, and one man were killed, and three men wounded. Sir F. Roberts's recognition of Norman's services was full and ungrudging. "Colonel Norman appears to have thoroughly appreciated the state of affairs

around Jagdallak, and to have exercised his command with great coolness and judgment," so he wrote in his Despatch of the 2nd of February; and the praise was all the more deserved because the effects of Norman's coolness and judgment were felt beyond the immediate scene of his operations, and contributed to calm the unrest that was showing itself among professedly friendly tribes; even the Khugianis, who had kept quiet since their defeat at Futtehabad, having begun to show signs of hostility. It was they and the Shinwarris who were believed to be the authors of a raid on a post near Ali Boghan, in which some jezailchis and camp-followers were killed, and the raiders got clear off with their loot, though pursued for some distance by a small column under Colonel J. Fryer. Subsequently, Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. D. Mackenzie marched to a group of villages ten miles from Jellalabad, where the perpetrators of the outrage were reported to have found shelter, and, failing to discover them, seized ten of the headmen to be held as hostages for their surrender.

This raid was a small matter, but all the elements out of which a big rising might have sprung, were present in the district; and Bright, keenly alive to the dangers created for his more advanced posts by the departure of Gough's Brigade, pushed forward three companies of the 51st Foot and the 45th Sikhs to strengthen Gandamak, where Brigadier-General Arbuthnot was now in command, replacing them at Jellalabad by the 27th Punjab Infantry, and ordered 11-9 Royal Artillery and the 12th Foot to hold themselves in readiness to march from Lundi Kotal as soon as the expected reinforcement from Peshawar should arrive. This upward movement of troops, combined with Norman's activity, checked any offensive action that the tribes may have been planning, and restored peace for a time to the line of communications.

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. There can be no doubt that the raising of the siege of Sherpur was the consequence of the advance of Charles Gough's Force. The first sign of a weakening in the enemy's resolution coincided with its arrival at Butkhak—the flash which conveyed the news to Sherpur warning the Afghans of its approach ; the end of the long-protracted assault came at one o'clock, just when its advanced guard sighted the Logar Bridge, and the Kohistanis were in full retreat before Roberts had decided to try the effect of a flank attack on the Ghazis holding the captured village near the eastern end of the Behmaru Heights—an attack which must have failed had the five thousand Kohistanis stuck to a position practically unassailable by cavalry.

OBSERVATION II. The surprise and dissatisfaction openly expressed in Sherpur at the tardy arrival of Charles Gough's column was due to ignorance of its strength and composition. It was believed to be large and well-equipped, and when at last it did appear, and men could see for themselves how meagre were its numbers, how defective its transport, the fact that it had met with no opposition blinded all, but the most thoughtful members of the garrison, to the risks it had really run, and deprived its commander of the grateful appreciation which was his due. How it happened that those risks were never realized can be only a matter of surmise. Probably Mahomed Jan's authority over his undisciplined host was confined to that portion of it which had followed him to Kabul, and his influence may not have been enough to induce a sufficiently large body of tribesmen to make a long march in fog and snow to attack an enemy whose strength rumours would be sure to exaggerate ; and though, as an experienced commander, he must have acted against his better judgment in sanctioning the attempt to take Sherpur by

storm before Gough could appear on the scene, it cannot have been evident to him then as, after the event, it is evident to the English military student to-day, that the attempt must fail.

Whatever the reasons for the Afghan General's faulty choice, its immediate and temporary effect was to wreck the tribal combination which Mushk-i-Alam had been at such pains to bring about; and its more distant and enduring result to hide from the British people the folly of the strategy which had placed two British forces in such a position that only a mistake on the part of the enemy, saved both of them from annihilation.<sup>1</sup>

For the initial error in that strategy—the hasty rush on Kabul at a season of the year when the road selected for the British advance was on the point of being closed by snow—the Indian Government must share the responsibility; the mistakes that followed lie at the door of the Commander to whom a free hand in the conduct of civil and military affairs in the invaded districts had been given. Knowing that his original line of communications was lost, knowing also that Afghanistan is a poor country, and that any attempt to deprive the people of their winter stores must goad them to resistance, Sir F. Roberts's first thought should have been the establishment of a new and safe route to India. On this he should have concentrated all the energy which was worse than wasted on foraging and punitive expeditions; meanwhile, his demands upon the people should have been restricted to such supplies as they were in the habit of furnishing to their own Government, and he should have abstained from destroying

<sup>1</sup> Had Mahomed Jan blown up the bridge over the then unfordable Kabul River and with half his force made a feint on Sherpur, and with the other half a real attack on the left flank of Gough's column, whilst entangled in the defile between Lattaband and Butkhak, that force must have been destroyed, or, at best, so weakened and driven back that it could have exercised no further influence on the course of events around Kabul, and the Afghans would have been free to continue the investment of the Sherpur cantonment till sickness should have reduced its garrison beyond the point at which a successful defence of its vast works was possible.—H. B. H.



the homes of the villagers, and from manufacturing criminals for his Military Commission to condemn, by the creation of an arbitrary and altogether artificial offence.

No measures, however wise, would have reconciled the Afghans to foreign rule, and the British occupation of Afghanistan would have been brought to an end in time by India's financial difficulties; but, in the absence of all acts of cruelty and oppression, no feelings of resentment would have been evoked strong enough to lead to a general rising of the tribes in winter; and by the spring, when their natural turbulence might have driven them into the field, the Khyber line would have been too strongly held, from end to end, for the troops in Kabul to be in any danger from their unrest.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### After the Siege. Reprisals

WHEN General Hills returned to his duties as Governor of Kabul, he found that the shops in the Hindu Quarter had been gutted, the houses of Afghans suspected of British leanings plundered, and the Kazilbashes and Hazaras maltreated by the followers of Mahomed Jan and Mushk-i-Alam. The Bala Hissar, much injured by the explosion of the 16th of October, and afterwards stripped of all woodwork by the British, had also suffered damage at the hands of the insurgents, and every grain of powder had vanished from the magazines. Wrecked as it was, it was soon occupied by Gough's Brigade, its security being assured by a system of redoubts and blockhouses on the Sher Darwaza Heights.

These works formed part of an extensive scheme of defence, at which gangs of British and Native soldiers and an army of hired labourers toiled for weeks. Every village and wall within a thousand yards of Sherpur were levelled to the ground; roads fit for guns laid out all round cantonments; the ramparts, where defective, completed; a trench and wall, broken here and there by blockhouses, were drawn along the whole length of the Behmaru ridge; and at the south-west end of the Siah Sang Heights, a strong fort, capable of holding a thousand men, was constructed, whilst a smaller fort was placed so as to command the wooden bridge across the Kabul River; and as the one was out of sight of the other, the two were linked together by a blockhouse erected on the northern end of

the range. The redoubts and blockhouses on the Sher Darwaza Heights for the protection of the Bala Hissar, and a large fort on the Asmai Heights dominating the city and connected with the plain by a wide zigzag road, completed works which, owing to the great area they covered, would have made a second defence of Sherpur more difficult than the first ; and a second siege was not as improbable as the complete dispersion of the besieging force might seem to promise. Already Mushk-i-Alam and Jan Mahomed, who had rallied their personal adherents at Ghazni, were proclaiming their intention of returning to Kabul at the end of the Naroz festival, which occurs in March ; and the policy of reprisals on which the British Commander had fallen back, was reviving the passions to which, when the time for action should arrive, the Afghan leaders would appeal.

On the 26th of December, Sir Frederick Roberts issued the following proclamation :—" At the instigation of some seditious men, the ignorant people, generally not considering the result, raised a rebellion. Now, many of the insurgents have received their reward, and as subjects are a trust from God, the British Government, which is just and merciful, as well as strong, has forgiven their guilt. It is now proclaimed that all who come in without delay will be pardoned, excepting only Mahomed Jan of Wardak, Mir Bacha of Kohistan, Samandar Khan of Logar, Ghulam Hyder of Chardeh, and the murderers of Sirdar Mahomed Hassein Khan. Come and make your submission without fear, of whatsoever tribe you may be. You can then remain in your houses in comfort and safety, and no harm will befall you. The British Government has no enmity towards the people. Anyone who rebels again will, of course, be punished. This condition is necessary. But all who come in without delay need have no fear or suspicion. The British Government speaks only that which is in its heart." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. pp. 307, 308.

The people thus exhorted to submission might perhaps have overlooked the insult contained in the assumption that they were rebels, and, as such, had reason to be thankful that their lives and property were to be spared, if only the promises made to them had been kept; but, even whilst the proclamation was being penned, its author was preparing to plunder and destroy the homes of the men whom he was inviting to trust in the justice and mercy of the British Government; and the day after its publication, before it could have reached Kohistan, a column, consisting of

4 Guns	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Hazara Mountain Battery,
200 Sabres	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Guides Cavalry,
500 Rifles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	67th Foot,
400 Rifles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Guides Infantry,
400 Rifles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5th Punjab Infantry,
400 Rifles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2nd Gurkhas,
A company and a half Sappers and Miners, who took with them materials for demolishing forts and villages, <sup>1</sup>								

left camp to carry fire and sword into Koh Daman, the richest district of that province, in which were situated Fort Baba Kushkar, Mir Bacha's stronghold, and the numerous villages which owned him as their chief.

Five days' provisions and two hundred rounds of ammunition were carried for each man of this expeditionary force, and, in addition to the mules and ponies required for its own needs, it took with it fifteen per cent. of all the transport in Sherpur to bring back the expected booty, as it was "intended to loot the place thoroughly."<sup>2</sup> No opposition was offered; Mir Bacha had fled to Charikar, and his people looked helplessly on whilst General Baker, to whom the work of destruction had been entrusted, levelled their houses to the ground, cut down their vineyards, and set the Gurkhas to work to

<sup>1</sup> Hensman, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

ring their fruit trees.<sup>1</sup> On the fifth day the expedition returned to cantonments, carrying with it rich booty and the seeds of much sickness, whilst behind them, shivering in the snow, hundreds of men, women, and children cursed the British name. Overawed by the terrible fate that had befallen Mir Bacha's people, the headmen of many other villages yielded without protest to Baker's demand for supplies, and as the villagers had no surplus stores, it was the grain and fodder laid by to keep them and their cattle alive till the coming harvest that was brought into Sherpur.

On the last day of the year, a second punitive expedition visited the Chardeh Valley and burned Baghwana, the village near which the guns had been lost on the 11th of December, partly, because the troops had been fired upon from its walls, partly, to punish the contumacy of two of its headmen, whom flogging had failed to induce to point out the graves of Lieutenants Hardie and Forbes. A third mallik proved more yielding, and when the bodies of the two young officers were exhumed, they were found not to have suffered mutilation. Nevertheless, four headmen were carried off to Sherpur, tried, sentenced to death, and hanged, together with a leather-cutter of Kabul who had tried to steal a mule.<sup>2</sup>

The tribunal by which these men were condemned to death was the Military Commission, presided over by Dunham Massy, which had reassembled as soon as British authority had been re-established in Kabul. Among its victims were ten tribesmen taken prisoners by the cavalry during Mahomed Jan's retreat, the charge brought against them being that of carrying arms in contravention of Sir

<sup>1</sup> "General Baker not only looted and levelled to the ground all forts and villages owned by Mir Butcha, but cut down his vineyards, and set the Gurkhas to work to 'ring' all the fruit trees. This will be a heavy loss to the villages, which mainly derive their local influence from the return yielded by their orchards and vineyards." (Hensman, p. 277.)

<sup>2</sup> *Pioneer Mail* of 22nd January. See, also, Hensman, pp. 277, 282.



F. Roberts's Proclamation.<sup>1</sup> They were hanged near a ruined village, a quarter of a mile from the western gate of cantonments, on a gallows wide enough to admit of five being executed at one time. *The Englishman*, a Calcutta paper, which mentioned this detail in its issue of the 12th of January, added that "so numerous have these hangings been that they excite but little attention; no natives of the country, however, appear as spectators."

The published accounts of this period reveal no moral disapproval of this policy of terrorism to which Sir F. Roberts had so rapidly reverted; but there were men in camp who condemned it on military and political grounds. They saw that though temporarily relieved from serious embarrassment, the British Force at Kabul was in a precarious position, and they desired to avoid giving occasion for a second outburst of revengeful fury. To persons of this way of thinking it seemed folly to punish a whole people as rebels, instead of coming to terms with them as enemies; folly, to hope to earn the gratitude of tribesmen by offering them an amnesty from which their leaders were excepted; folly, to send out expeditions to burn villages and requisition supplies when the most pressing need of the troops was the re-establishment of communication with India, the base from which all their ammunition must be, and the greater part of their food ought to be, drawn. "How all this will end I do not know," wrote Colonel Macgregor in his Diary, on the 31st of December. "There is, no doubt, a very strong feeling of hostility against us, which all this indiscriminate hanging and burning of villages intensifies. In fact we have not got a single friend in the country."<sup>2</sup>

The end, so far as "this indiscriminate hanging and burning of

<sup>1</sup> "We declared in our own Proclamation of October 28th that all persons concerned in attacks upon British authority would meet with condign punishment, and we have just hanged ten men caught with arms in their hands during Mahomed Jan's retreat." (*The Daily News*, dated February 9th, 1880. See, also, *Pioneer Mail* of January 8th, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 171.

villages " was concerned, came directly after these words were written and from an unexpected quarter. From the time when telegrams and letters of newspaper correspondents with the Force at Kabul began to appear in English journals, the British public had given signs of an uneasy conscience; and, on the 1st of December, the growing dissatisfaction with the proceedings of the Military Commission found powerful expression in an article entitled " Martial Law in Kabul " by Mr. Frederic Harrison published in the *Fortnightly Review*, then edited by Mr. John Morley, a copy of which was at once forwarded to Sir. F. Roberts by Mr. E. Stanhope, Under-Secretary of State for War. During the greater part of December, the minds of men at home were too full of anxiety for the safety of the garrison of Sherpur for much criticism of the methods which had precipitated the great tribal rising; but when the glad tidings of the raising of the siege were followed by telegrams announcing the resumption of the sittings of the Military Commission and the destruction of Mir Bacha's villages, influential voices were again raised in protest against the fiction that the abdication of Yakub Khan had transferred the sovereignty of Afghanistan to the Commander of a small British force, occupying a few square miles of a single Afghan province, and that the transfer had converted armed opposition to Sir F. Roberts's authority from a war of national defence, into rebellion punishable by death. On the 29th of December, the Peace Society, presided over by Mr. Henry Pease, M.P., issued an address to the people of the United Kingdom calling upon them " to repudiate a system of terrorism which could only find a parallel in the worst times of Barbarian conquest; " and four days later, Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, warned his countrymen that " he who would not rise to rescue his people from huge crimes into which her present rulers were plunging her, would be a partaker of their sins. " Speaking at Wakefield, on the 20th of January, Lord Ripon accused the Government of having reduced Afghanistan to anarchy, and of having

rendered her people hostile "not only from religious and national hatred, but from the recollections of slaughtered fellow-countrymen and their burned and deserted villages." On the 21st, Mr. Grant Duff, M.P., declared that the words applied by the historian Kaye to the first Afghan War—"that both in principle and act it was unrighteous, and the curse of God was on it"—applied equally to the second; and on the 22nd, Mr. Thomas Chambers, M.P., denounced the war in equally scathing terms. The *Daily News*, in which these protests appeared, drove home their lessons in many powerful articles, and Liberal journals throughout the country were active in rousing public indignation against a war which had brought such discredit upon the nation. The agitation, steadily increasing in volume and weight,<sup>1</sup> culminated in a Memorial to the Prime Minister from a Committee presided over by the Duke of Westminster,<sup>2</sup> and in a second article in the *Fortnightly Review*, in which Mr. F. Harrison entered into a minute analysis of a number of individual acts, which, in his opinion, contravened the generally accepted law of nations, and British military and political traditions of the conduct due to an enemy in arms in defence of his own country. The Memorial appeared in the *Times* of the 3rd of February, and, on the 6th, the same journal published the following telegram from Lieutenant J. Sherston, orderly officer to General Roberts:—"No one executed unless convicted of attack on Residency. No soldier shot for fighting against us. Fuller explanations submitted to Government, which I am confident will be considered satisfactory;" and a week later,

<sup>1</sup> At a meeting on "Peace and War" the working men's delegates "denounced these barbarous raids and this lawless butchery." (*The Fortnightly Review* for December, 1879, p. 784.)

<sup>2</sup> The Memorial was signed by the Bishops of Oxford and Exeter, Sir A. Hobhouse, Sir F. Powell Buxton, Sir C. Trevelyan, Mr. S. Morley, the Rev. W. H. Fremantle, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Mr. F. Harrison, Mr. J. A. Froude, Professor E. S. Beesley, Mr. Leonard Courtney, Mr. Ashton Dilke, Mr. J. Morley, and other well-known writers and public men.—H. B. H.

Mr. E. Stanhope read a letter from Sir F. Roberts, dated January the 10th, stating that not a single native had been hanged for merely fighting against us.

Sherston's telegram was Sir F. Roberts's answer to the second agitation provoked by the renewal of Martial Law in Kabul, of which he must have been apprised by telegraph; and the General's own letter of the 10th of January, the answer to Mr. Harrison's first article in the *Fortnightly Review*, which had opened his eyes to the fact that measures of vengeance and reprisals which seemed quite natural and proper to Englishmen at Kabul, wore a very different aspect in the eyes of Englishmen at home. The effect of this discovery was the cessation of military executions—the four headmen of Baghwana and the leather-cutter of Kabul, the last men condemned by the Military Commission, were hanged on the 3rd of January—and the compilation of a detailed statement of the number of men who had suffered death during the British occupation of Kabul and the offences for which they had been condemned.

This document was received at the War Office on the 12th of March; but the dissolution of Parliament, on the 24th, interfered with its immediate discussion, and when, a few weeks later, a new Ministry met a new House of Commons, other matters were occupying the public attention, and it escaped the ordeal of a parliamentary debate.

The first thing to be noted with regard to this Return is that it was forwarded to the Home Government by the Viceroy and his Council without comment; the second, that it is not signed, as is the usual custom in such cases, either by the President of the Commission or by a responsible Staff-Officer; the third, that it contains no dates; the fourth, that it closes on the 26th of December, though the Memorandum which accompanies it was written a month later. Owing to the absence of dates, it is difficult to connect the cases in the Return with persons mentioned in telegrams and letters to English and Indian journals; but Nos. sixty-five to one hundred

and thirteen were evidently persons captured in Baker's raid of the 8th of November. Of these forty-nine prisoners, according to the Return, twenty-five were released; whereas, according to Hensman's circumstantial account already quoted (see Chapter XIV.), forty-nine was the number actually executed—eleven on the 10th of November, twenty-eight on the 11th, ten on the 12th. In this connection, it is significant that Macgregor should mention in his Diary of the 29th of March that "the General had sent for Hensman and showed him Harrison's new article on the hangings,"<sup>1</sup> the facts and figures in which were chiefly taken from that correspondent's letters; yet neither at the time, nor in 1882, when the letters were republished in book-form, did Hensman alter or retract one of his statements, and their accuracy has never been impugned—facts that tell against the trustworthiness of the Return, which, in any case, is defective, as, by its abrupt close on the 26th of December, all record is shut out of the ten men hanged on the 30th for having arms in their hands during Mahomed Jan's retreat, and of the five executed on the 3rd of January.

But if the figures of the Return fail to command confidence, it is still more difficult to accept its statements as to the grounds on which the accused were condemned—statements which sought to establish in every case a connection between the sentence pronounced, and some crime which British public opinion would regard as worthy of death. In the Memorandum which accompanied the Return, Sir F. Roberts asserted the existence of this connection with great directness, for, after defending his right to treat as rebels all Afghans who had opposed his advance, he went on to declare that "in no instance were the soldiers thus brought in executed, unless proved to have taken part in the attack upon the Residency, or to have committed other of the crimes enumerated in the proclamation."

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 184.



Both the Return and the Memorandum are contradicted in this matter by Hensman, who, with the thought just dawning in his mind that to hang men for opposing the enemies of their country required excuse, yet made no secret of the fact that men were actually being executed at Kabul on that charge alone; contradicted also by the entries in Macgregor's Diary, in which he recorded his objection to the killing of men who merely fought against us, and his distrust of the evidence which satisfied the Military Commission; instancing a case in which a prisoner, convicted on the mere assertion of his guilt by Hyat Khan, was condemned for having "been the moving spirit—on night of the 5th of October—to get people to go out and fight us, and for having been "present at the fight (of Charasiab) with a standard." <sup>1</sup>

Sir F. Roberts's explanation that, in offering rewards for the betrayal of such men as this Sultan Aziz, he had in view simply the capture of participants in the attack on the Residency, cannot be reconciled with the wording of the proclamation of the 12th of October, which *first* offered rewards for the apprehension of persons concerned in the tragedy of the 3rd of September, and *then* a like bribe for the surrender of persons who had fought against the British at Charasiab and Kabul; neither does it agree with the proclamation of the 12th of November, which exempted all persons belonging to the latter category, not being leaders, from further prosecution. If there was no intention of putting the clause against Afghan soldiers, as soldiers, into force, why insert it in the first proclamation? and if it was never acted on, why publish the second to allay fears which could not have existed?

The statement of the Memorandum that "the Military Commission . . . tried every case; and without their deliberate verdict and sentence, and without (I trust) calm and dispassionate considera-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 140.

tion by me, not one sentence of death was awarded, confirmed, or carried into effect," cannot be accepted as correct, since, on the 13th of December, eight Kohistanis—four of them men of position and four servants—were shot, without trial, by Sir F. Roberts's orders. The story was told by Hensman in his letter to the *Pioneer* of the 13th of January, and reappeared, unaltered, in his book.<sup>1</sup>

The most glaring mis-statement contained in the Memorandum, however, is to be found in Paragraph 9, in which it is asserted that only one fort near Kabul, one in Kohistan, and one in Maidan had been destroyed by the troops, though Sir F. Roberts's Political Diary showed that on the 24th of November, he had ordered the destruction of "all the Umar Khel Villages"—eleven in number—and that Ben-i-Badam shared the same fate on the 28th, whilst Hensman's letters to the *Pioneer* place the destruction of Baghwana, and the looting and levelling to the ground of Mir Bacha's villages, beyond the possibility of doubt.

It is not surprising that the Viceroy and his Council, with the Kabul Diaries and Hensman's letters in their hands, should have forwarded the Memorandum and the Return to the British Government without comment; but there is reason both for astonishment and regret in their having forwarded them at all, knowing as they did, that they would be laid before Parliament as a satisfactory and sufficient defence of the methods by which British authority had been upheld at Kabul, till the pressure of public opinion at home compelled their abandonment.

<sup>1</sup> The story as narrated by Mr. Howard Hensman is peculiarly painful. The Chief, a young Kohistani, met his fate bravely; another, who was a petty chief, pleaded in fear and trembling for his life, but pleaded in vain; yet a third appealed for mercy to the trooper told off to execute him—"You are (he said) a Mahomedan, and I am one of your holy men. You cannot shoot me!" But orders had to be obeyed, and the whole party, four of whom were servants, were summarily put to death.—H. B. H.

See full account given by Hensman, pp. 228, 229.

## CHAPTER XXV

### Preparations for a Spring Campaign

#### SECOND ACTION OF CHARASIAB

ON the 9th of January, Sir F. Roberts held a durbar, which was attended by a number of Kohistani and Ghilzai headmen, and also by a deputation of Hazaras, who had come to Sherpur to solicit British protection against their Afghan neighbours, whose vengeance they had provoked by attacking the villages near Ghazni and in Wardak whilst their fighting men were away with Mahomed Jan at Kabul.

The General began his speech with the usual assurance of the British Government's desire to respect the lives, property, and religion of its new subjects, and then went on to express his satisfaction at the presence in his camp of so many representatives of tribes recently in arms against him, and his hope that all who still held aloof would follow so good an example. He announced the reappointment of Sirdar Shahbaz Khan as Governor of Kohistan, and closed the assembly by presenting dresses of honour and gifts of rupees to certain chiefs who had remained friendly during the late insurrection, and by exacting hostages for future good conduct from the Kohistanis.

In addressing an Afghan audience, Roberts was bound to assume that the lesson taught to the tribes by their failure at Sherpur would have enduring results ; and though, in his heart, he must have known that his position was little less precarious than before the siege, it was mortifying to discover that the Hindu merchants in Kabul—

a very important body of men—doubted his ability to protect them. “You want more men,” they are reported to have said, “if you are to hold Kabul and keep out the enemy. What are ten thousand to fifty thousand? There must be twenty thousand to guard Sherpur and the city;” and as the additional ten thousand were slow in appearing, they withdrew with their families and property to Peshawar.<sup>1</sup>

The changes that were being effected at Kabul and on the line of communications might not be sufficiently striking to restore the confidence which the events of the latter half of December had destroyed; yet, notwithstanding the difficulties put in the way of movements of any kind by incessant snowstorms, much was done during the months of January and February to strengthen the British position in Northern Afghanistan. Batches of sick and wounded—always a heavy burden on a small force in an enemy’s country—were sent off, week by week, to India. Colonel C. M. Macgregor accompanied the first, commissioned by Roberts to confer with Bright as to the disposition of troops between Jamrud and Lattaband, which station had been reoccupied by the 3rd Sikhs, under Colonel Noel Money, on the 31st of December. To repair the wear and tear of the campaign, and to relieve the strain on the food stores, the 12th Bengal Cavalry and the 14th Bengal Lancers marched for Peshawar on the 6th of February;<sup>2</sup> and a further economy in consumption was obtained by sending away upwards of a thousand transport

<sup>1</sup> “It may be a small matter, after all, that these terror-stricken Hindus turn their faces eastwards; but it should be remembered that, all through the troublous times of the Durani Dynasty, their forefathers, and they themselves, have remained in Kabul, and they are only leaving the city now, because they do not believe in the power of the British to hold it against another army of 50,000 Afghans.” (Hensman, pp. 292, 293.)

<sup>2</sup> “The 10th, 12th, and 14th Bengal Cavalry are returning to India to repair the wear and tear of the campaign, which has been very severe on the cavalry arm.” (Telegram *Times* Correspondent, of 24th January, 1880.)

animals, some to work in the Khyber, some to be fitted with proper saddles at Peshawar. Meanwhile, the Commissariat Department, spreading its net far and wide, brought up the reserve of food stuff to a fifty days' supply by sweeping three thousand sheep and four thousand five hundred camel-loads of bhusa into camp; and convoys of ammunition, warm clothing, rum, and dhal had begun to arrive from India. To replace in some degree the cavalry that had been dispensed with, a Mounted Infantry Corps, consisting of three officers and one hundred and twenty men, was formed, and, with some difficulty, furnished with mounts; and to provide for the defence of his now greatly extended fortifications, Sir F. Roberts asked for a heavy battery, gunners to man the captured Afghan artillery, two additional Native Infantry regiments, and drafts to bring up the strength of each of his original Infantry corps to eight hundred men. He also intimated that, at the first sign of tribal unrest, he should call up the moveable columns at Gandamak and Jellalabad, and warned the military authorities in India to keep sufficient transport ready at Peshawar to enable troops from the Reserve to take the place of corps withdrawn from the line of communications.

Those authorities were quite as anxious as the General at Kabul to increase the strength of the Sherpur garrison and to keep all the troops in the field in a state of efficiency; but, from the first, they had been unable to equip one force with transport without robbing another, and early they had begun to discover that there was a limit to the number of men at their disposal. "I consider," wrote Lord Lytton to the Secretary of State for India on the 9th of December, "that our greatest danger at the present moment (and it is, I think, a very real and imminent one) is the danger of wearing out our Native army. I do not think we can employ Native troops for lengthened periods beyond the North-West Frontier without serious risk of injury to their spirit. While they are actually fighting, they will keep in fairly good heart, but what tries and disgusts them is picket



and escort duty during the long, dead seasons of trans-frontier service ; and the unpopularity of such duty amongst the Native troops is aggravated by the fact that the burden of it must unavoidably fall on them more heavily than on the Europeans, who are not so well able to stand exposure to the climate.”<sup>1</sup>

The logical outcome of this recognition of the necessary unpopularity of the war with the Native troops, an unpopularity which was showing itself in such a dearth of recruits for the regiments in Afghanistan that, a little later, the drafts asked for by Roberts could not be furnished, and the Commander-in-Chief had to recommend that men should be enlisted for service beyond the frontier at a higher rate of pay, with bonus and special privileges in respect of food and clothing—the logical outcome of this recognition of dangers ahead, would have been proposals for limiting the area in British occupation and bringing the war as quickly as possible to a close. Instead of such proposals, however, a comprehensive scheme for further operations in Afghanistan was prepared early in January, under orders from the Governor-General in Council. Replaced in Kandahar by a Bombay Division, Sir Donald Stewart's Force was to start for Kabul at the first signs of approaching spring. At the same time, Roberts was to visit Kohistan, and when he had sufficiently overawed

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 294.

In a telegram dated January 24th, the *Times'* Kabul Correspondent referred as follows to this serious question :—

“ In considering the various shapes which our future policy in Afghanistan may take,” so wrote General Vaughan, “ it is most necessary to remember the enormous strain which this and the preceding campaign have put upon the small Indian Native army, which no attempt has yet been made to strengthen, or even effectually recruit. Casualties from battle and sickness have greatly weakened the actual strength of the regiments at the front, and though they have borne their hardships with the utmost cheerfulness, there is no doubt that the men are longing to return to India, and would grow dissatisfied if they thought their service here would be indefinitely prolonged. The Native regiments holding the line of communications are also, in military phrase, much used up, the convoy and post duties being very severe.”

that province, to march to Bamian, a valley in the Hindu Kush, on the direct route to Afghan Turkestan, eight thousand four hundred and ninety-four feet above sea-level, and a hundred and seven miles from Kabul, from which city it is separated by three mountain ranges, traversed by difficult and dangerous passes, which at that season of the year would still be deep in snow. What he was intended to do there is not clear, but taking into account the weeks that would have been consumed in getting there, and that he had to be back at Sherpur early enough to support Sir D. Stewart on his arrival at Ghazni towards the end of April, it is certain that beyond frightening the inhabitants of the few poor villages on the way thither and, perhaps, extracting from them some scanty supplies, his expedition could have for its only results the destruction of a large amount of transport and the exhaustion of a considerable proportion of his troops. Meanwhile, as soon as the snow had melted on the Shutargardan, a Force was to march to Kabul from the Kuram; a Column from the Khyber line was to operate against the Ghilzais in the Laghman Valley; and, should the Afridis give trouble, the Reserve Division was to furnish troops to pay that visit to the Barah and Tirah Valleys which Sir Frederick Maude had found impracticable the previous year.

This far-reaching plan received the sanction of the Indian Government only to shrink into meagre proportions at the first contact with the reality of things. Sir F. Roberts, quite ready to undertake the proposed operations in Kohistan and Bamian, had to point out that before doing so he must, owing to the vastly increased area covered by his fortifications, withdraw all his troops from Sherpur and distribute them between the Bala Hissar and an entrenched camp to be created on the Siah Sang Heights. Watson's troops and transport<sup>1</sup> proved on investigation to be so weakened by disease

<sup>1</sup> Nearly a half of his transport was non-effective.—H. B. H.

as to be incapable of furnishing a column strong enough to fight its way over the Shutargardan ; and everywhere, except at Kandahar, deficiency of beasts of burden put a veto on the projected movements—an unpleasant truth, which Sir Michael Kennedy brought home to the authors of the scheme in a very plainly worded Memorandum of the 10th February, 1880 :—

“It is obviously an easy matter,” so wrote the Inspector-General of Transport, “to detail on paper a given force, and to project that it shall operate at a given time and in a given direction ; but unless it is also clearly and satisfactorily ascertained and determined whether the transport exists, or can be brought into existence, for moving and supplying such a force, actual results attained may not correspond with those that were intended.” . . . “I have now to consider,” so he went on, “how far the transport at disposal will meet the demands entailed by the project of operations. . . . Owing to the existence of some doubt—1st, as to the exact amount of transport needed, the quantity of supplies to be provided for each section of the forces, either to be mobilized or left in garrison, not having been given ; and 2nd, as to the correct allowance to be made for casualties of all sorts and from all causes among the transport itself—all that can be done is to frame an approximate estimate. . . . The net results are as follows :—the Kabul Force, as projected, is deficient in transport to the extent of about 1,000 camels (or 2,000 mules) ; but this deficiency can no doubt be supplied before the time for action arrives.

“The 2nd and 3rd Divisions in the Khyber and the lines of communication are sufficiently provided for, so long as the Koochi carriage (hired carriage) can be depended on for general transport ; but should the Koochis leave, as they may be expected to do in April, the Khyber line will then be deficient to the extent of 2,500 camels.

“The Kuram Force, whose wants, since General Roberts

advanced in September last, have always been postponed to those of other forces, is deficient in transport; and if it were necessary to equip fully this column, with which it is proposed General Watson should advance, it would absorb all the transport available, and none would be left for the troops in garrison or holding the line."

This "approximate estimate" put an end to the advance of a Kuram column, and to all further talk of, at present, invading the Laghman Valley, or of lifting the "purdah" from Barah and Tirah; and when it was discovered that, instead of a deficiency of a thousand camels at Kabul, General Roberts would require to be furnished with five thousand two hundred and fifty camels, or their equivalent in ponies and mules, in addition to his transport at Kabul and Peshawar and what he could purchase on the spot, the expeditions to Kohistan and Bamian were also abandoned, leaving nothing remaining of the original scheme except the advance of the Kandahar Force, and the support to be afforded to it by Roberts, which, at Sir D. Stewart's request, was to be rendered, not at Ghazni, but at Sheikabad.<sup>1</sup> Stewart himself was to go on to Kabul and assume the command of all the forces in and around that city, but his Division was to occupy the Logar Valley; and as it was thought probable that it might have to pass the summer at Ali Khel or on the Peiwar Mountain, Watson was instructed to collect in the Kuram six months' supplies for five thousand European and ten thousand Native troops, whilst, with a view to some contingency that might call for different dispositions, Roberts was ordered to store at Kabul a three months' supply of food and a reserve of six hundred rounds of ammunition per man for a like number. The collection of the transport needed

<sup>1</sup> When it was found that Watson's Force was too weak to move, it was decided that Roberts should occupy Kushi and the Shutargardan, with a view to opening up the Kuram route; but this movement had to be countermanded.—  
H. B. H.

for the conveyance of these supplies and of the baggage of fresh corps sent up to Kabul, added to that required for the equipment of the Reserve Division, equal to ten thousand camel-power,<sup>1</sup> inflicted serious damage on the agriculturists and traders of India ; and it was clear that so long as the occupation of Afghanistan continued, there could be no end to the calls made upon the waning resources of the country. "Day by day," so wrote Sir Michael Kennedy in his Supply and Transport Report, "it had become more difficult to obtain suitable transport. The Punjab had been swept and re-swept, and very few animals could be obtained elsewhere. It seemed as if the military exigencies would not cease until the country had been entirely denuded ; and animals had to be sought from very distant localities—at Benares and stations in Bengal, and even from Darjiling. Prices, of course, rose in correspondence with fresh demands ; but what was worse, it became absolutely necessary to accept large numbers of pony mares, which would have been better left in the country for breeding purposes, and also many animals, mules, ponies, and camels, that were younger than they ought to have been, to fit them for hard work with troops in the field."<sup>2</sup>

A large part of the heavy mortality prevailing among the transport animals was doubtless due to the immaturity regretted by Sir M. Kennedy ; but sore backs and mange, from which so many suffered—out of the eleven thousand two hundred and sixty-four beasts of burden at Roberts's disposal by the end of March, sixteen hundred and twenty-five, or fifteen per cent., were incapacitated principally

<sup>1</sup> "This amount of carriage was completed on the 13th of February, 1880 ; but as neither the political nor military situation then admitted of any relaxation of efforts, and as it was considered necessary to make provision for the equipment of a further reserve—also to have a supply of animals always ready in hand to make good the heavy drain of casualties in constant progress—a further call for 10,000 camel-power was made on the 24th February, 1880." (Sir Michael Kennedy's Report on Supply and Transport, p. 8.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



from these two causes—were attributable to defective gear, bad loading, and poor or insufficient food.<sup>1</sup>

Early in March, the Commander-in-Chief reorganized the troops on the Khyber line and took the control of them out of Roberts's hands; Major-General Bright being appointed Inspector-General of Communications, and instructed to report in future to Army Headquarters, instead of, as in the past, to Kabul. The line over which his authority extended was divided into three sections.

1. From Jamrud to Basawal, inclusive, under Brigadier-General W. A. Gib.

2. From Basawal to Safed Sang, but not inclusive of either, under Brigadier-General J. Doran.

3. From Safed Sang to Butkhak inclusive, under Brigadier-General R. S. Hill.

The moveable columns at Jellalabad and Gandamak were placed under the command of Brigadier-General C. G. Arbuthnot; the troops belonging to the Reserve Division were absorbed into the forces holding the line of communications; and Brigadier-General G. C. Hankin was temporarily appointed to the Peshawar District.

At the same time, by order of the Commander-in-Chief, the Kabul Force was divided into two Divisions; the 1st under Sir F. Roberts's immediate command, the 2nd under Major-General J. Ross, late commanding the Reserve at Peshawar; the supreme control of the whole being vested in the first-named officer. Brigadier-General Hugh Gough was appointed to the command of the Cavalry Brigade, *vice* Dunham Massy recalled, and the 1st and 2nd Infantry Brigades of the newly formed Division were assigned respectively to Brigadier-

<sup>1</sup> Roberts complained that the transport of incoming regiments arrived far more frequently with sore backs than the cattle on convoy duty. Probably the latter started in better condition, and it was easier to regulate their marches; also, commissariat packages are less difficult to adjust than regimental baggage, consisting of articles of every size, shape, and weight.—H. B. H.

Generals W. Roberts and Charles Gough. The following staff-officers were appointed to Ross's Division :—

Major W. J. Boyes . . . Assistant Adjutant-General.  
 Captain the Hon. C. Dutton . Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
 Colonel C. R. O. Evans to the command of Royal Artillery.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel D. Limond to the command of Royal Engineers.

During the latter half of the month of March the Kabul Force was brought up to a strength of over twelve thousand men by the arrival of the under-named reinforcements :—

24th Punjab Infantry . . Lieutenant-Colonel F. B. Norman.  
 45th Sikhs . . . Lieutenant-Colonel F. M. Armstrong.  
 17th Bengal Cavalry . . Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. Watson.  
 27th Punjab Infantry . . Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Hughes.  
 No. 6-8 Royal Artillery (screw mountain guns), Major T. Graham.  
 3rd Bengal Cavalry . . . Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. D. Mackenzie.

These troops were followed on the 5th of April by the heavy battery 10-11 Royal Artillery, escorted by drafts for the British regiments at the front and the men of the Garrison Battery 12-9 Royal Artillery, sent from Attock in response to Roberts's request for gunners to man the captured Afghan guns.<sup>1</sup>

All through January and February and well into March, the weather had been very severe, heavy snowstorms following each other in quick succession ; then rain fell, the snow melted, dull, cloudy skies gave place to bright sunshine, hill and vale were suddenly clothed in a profusion of spring flowers, and in the Sherpur cantonment all was once again cheerfulness and activity. The Cavalry, accompanied by the Mounted Infantry, reconnoitred unopposed towards Argandeh and Charasiab ; and on the Siah Sang Heights by Roberts's orders

<sup>1</sup> Part of the road over the Lattaband Pass had to be remade to allow of the passage of the Heavy Battery, the original gradients being too steep.—H. B. H.

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Ross assembled the troops that were to march to Sheikabad in support of Stewart's advance from Ghazni, consisting of

4 Guns 6-8 Royal Artillery (screw guns),	Major T. Graham.
6 Guns No. 4 Hazara Mountain Battery,	Captain A. Broadfoot.
1 Squadron 9th Lancers . . . .	Captain the Hon. H. Legge.
3rd Bengal Cavalry . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. D. Mackenzie.
2 Squadrons 3rd Punjab Cavalry	Major A. Vivian.
9th Foot . . . . .	Colonel W. Daunt.
23rd Pioneers . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel H. Collett.
24th Punjab Infantry . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel F. B. Norman.
4th Gurkhas . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel F. F. Rowcroft.
No. 3 Company Sappers and Miners, Lieutenant H. Dove.	
Total strength—10 Guns, 850 Sabres, and 2,700 Rifles.	

Besides a limited quantity of stores for its own use, the column was to carry with it a ten days' supply of sugar, tea, and rum for General Stewart's troops.

No news had been received from the latter General since shortly after leaving Khelat-i-Ghilzai ; but, as it was known that he expected to be at Ghazni on the 21st of April, Ross started on the 16th, halted the first night at Killa Kazi, the second at Argandeh, and on the 18th entered Maidan, where he encamped for two days, whilst foragers scoured the valley, taking forcible possession of the little grain and fodder that had remained to the inhabitants after Baker's November raid. The whole population showed itself fiercely hostile, and Bahadur Khan, whose villages had been destroyed on the former occasion, gave such signs of his determination to resist these new despoilers that Charles Gough moved out of camp on the 19th, with a strong force, blew up the towers of the recalcitrant villages, and succeeded in bringing in the confiscated supplies without actual bloodshed.

Rumours reaching Ross that large numbers of Logaris were gathering to attack him in flank and rear, he despatched reconnoitring parties to try to discover the truth of the report. Only one of these parties was fired on, the shot wounding a man and his horse, but

all returned without having obtained any trustworthy information. Meanwhile circumstantial accounts of the movement, of which Mahomed Hussan Khan, late Governor of Jellalabad, was the leader, had been carried to Kabul, on receipt of which Sir F. Roberts sent out Colonel Jenkins to occupy Charasiab, with a view to holding in check the hostile gathering, which was threatening Ross's communications. Jenkins's troops consisted of

2 Guns F-A Royal Horse Artillery,	Lieutenant J. H. Wodehouse,
2 Squadrons Guides Cavalry	. Lieutenant-Colonel G. Stewart,
266 Rifles 92nd Highlanders	. Major G. S. White,
600 Rifles Guides Infantry	. Lieutenant-Colonel R. B. P. P. Campbell,

an inadequate force, considering the distance of Charasiab from Sherpur and the uncertainty as to the strength of the enemy.

On the first night Jenkins encamped at Ben-i-Hissar, and on the 21st took up a position about a mile and a half in advance of Charasiab, and about the same distance east of the site occupied by Sir F. Roberts's camp on the 6th of October, 1879, but facing in the opposite direction—south, instead of north.<sup>1</sup> To the right of the camp lay terraced fields, dotted over with small forts, and at the distance of about fifteen hundred yards, a range of high hills swept round its left and front. One of these hills Jenkins occupied the same evening with a strong picket of the Guides; but the next day a reconnoitring party discovered that the highest peak of all, the spurs of which run right down to the road, was in the possession of the enemy. The 23rd and 24th passed without incident; but, at 2 o'clock on the morning of the 25th, a friendly *Mallik* came into camp to warn its commander that the enemy had moved to Safed Sang and were now only six miles off. Jenkins at once took measures to forestall attack. By his orders, whilst the camp was still wrapped in darkness, the Guides

<sup>1</sup> See, Sketch Map, p. 65.

Infantry fell in in front of their tents, ready to support a strong cavalry patrol which had gone out to reconnoitre towards Safed Sang. At the same time a picket of the Guides started off to occupy its usual post of observation on the south-eastern hills ; but before it could reach its destination, day broke, disclosing a large body of Afghans scattered along the heights, and it had no choice but to return to camp. A little later, firing was heard to the south, and presently the cavalry patrol was observed steadily retiring, followed by a considerable body of tribesmen.

At the first intimation of the enemy's close proximity, all the troops had been got under arms, and when the tents had been struck and loaded up, the laden baggage animals were withdrawn behind a detached hill, nearly a mile in rear of camp, the summit of which was occupied by a company of the Guides and half a company of Highlanders, commanded by Captain Hon. J. S. Napier of the latter corps ; whilst twenty Rifles of the Guides under Lieutenant M. C. Cooke-Collis, posted in a small fort about a thousand yards westward, not only fulfilled their immediate purpose, but provided for an orderly retreat in the event of the whole force having to fall back. To meet a front attack, Jenkins deployed two companies of Highlanders, under Major White, across and to the right of the Logar road ; five companies of the Guides, under Captain A. G. Hammond, prolonging the line on the left, with both flanks thrown back, ready to meet any movement from the west or east. A karez, or underground watercourse, gave some cover to the infantry, but as Jenkins had no reserve, and only two companies of Highlanders and one of Guides in support, he had to keep the cavalry for hours under a galling fire, a trying ordeal, which the men bore with exemplary courage and discipline, constantly moving round and round in the small space to which they were confined, in order to disconcert the enemy's aim.

Soon, three thousand Afghans, under a heavy fire from the British guns and rifles, were working their way down the hillsides ; some



of the boldest planting their standards within one and two hundred yards of the Highlanders and Sikhs. "At one moment," so wrote an officer who took part in the fight, "they rose up all round with a shout, and threatened to break over us like a great wave. Men felt for their pistols, and instinctively tightened their grip on their swords; but it turned out that even the Ghazis down below were in no hurry to face the bayonets of our slender fighting line; and the human froth above subsided as quickly as it had risen."<sup>1</sup>

But meanwhile the Afghans who had driven in the Cavalry, had been joined by many bands of tribesmen, summoned from distant villages, and now began to extend their left with the object of outflanking the British troops and getting in their rear. To check this movement, which, if successful, would have rendered the position untenable, Jenkins hurried off Lieutenant E. D. H. Daly with a troop of Guides Cavalry to seize a ruined fort about 1,200 yards on the right rear of the spot where the British camp had stood; and, as the enemy continued to press on, he despatched a detachment of the Guides Infantry, under Subadar Shere Sing, to Daly's assistance.

By this time the Afghans, whose numbers had grown from three to five thousand, were occupying the segment of a huge circle, extending from a point in the hills east of the British position, directly opposite to the detached hill behind which the baggage had found shelter, right round to the enclosures and gardens of Charasiab. Their front was covered by a cloud of skirmishers, so skilfully hidden as to offer no mark to the British sharpshooters. Their dispositions and tactics forbade all movement on Jenkins's part; for, had he attempted a counter-attack to clear his front, the tribesmen on his flanks would have closed in on his rear, cutting his force in half and severing his communication with Sherpur.

About 8 a.m. the two guns, which so far had been firing over the

<sup>1</sup> *Kuram, Kabul, and Kandahar*, by Lieutenant C. G. Robertson, pp. 180, 181.

heads of the troops from a position within the late camping ground, withdrew some four hundred yards to an embankment which afforded them good cover, and from which they could fire freely in all directions; and some hours later, when Jenkins saw that his Infantry were equal to holding the enemy in check, he sent back the Cavalry, which had had many casualties—now a man, now a horse falling wounded or dead—to form up in rear of the Artillery. Before that time, he had received the welcome assurance that help was on the way. He had heliographed a description of the state of things in the Logar Valley to the signalling station on the Darwaza Heights the moment the sun rose above the eastern hills; and between 9 and 10 a.m. he sent a second message, reporting that he had had three men killed, seven wounded, and that though he was holding his own well, the enemy was being reinforced. To this second message he received the reply that a relieving force under General Macpherson had already left cantonments.

The news of Jenkins's unpleasant predicament reached Sherpur at an inopportune moment. A few days before, spies had reported that a large body of Kohistanis—some six or eight thousand men—had assembled near the ruins of Fort Baba Kushkar, and from the Governor of Kohistan, Shahbaz Khan, came in a rumour that Mir Bacha was intending to take Sherpur by a *coup de main*. To strengthen the garrison, much weakened by the despatch of expeditionary forces to Sheikabad and Charasiab, Roberts at once drew in a picket of 100 men of the 25th Punjab Infantry, which had been posted in the Pai Minar Pass to watch the road into Koh Daman, replacing it by a troop of cavalry. At the same time he established signalling parties on many commanding points to keep a good look-out in all directions, manned the ten blockhouses on the Behmaru Heights, and strengthened the guards at all the entrances to cantonments. It was a serious matter to weaken a force which seemed on the eve of being itself besieged; but at all risks, Jenkins and his troops must

be rescued from their perilous position, so Macpherson was ordered to get together a column of eighty-four sabres and nine hundred and sixty-two rifles, which was to be supported by a part of the Cavalry Brigade under Hugh Gough.<sup>1</sup> Baker's Brigade had to furnish the troops required to replace those withdrawn from the Reserve in the Behmaru Gorge, from the defence of the eastern end of the Behmaru Heights, the Siah Sang plateau, and the Asmai Heights; and this change of garrison caused considerable delay, but, at nine o'clock, Macpherson marched out of Sherpur with—

4 Guns No. 2 Mountain Battery .	Major G. Swinley,
275 Rifles 92nd Highlanders .	Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Parker,
555 Rifles 45th Sikhs . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel F. M. Armstrong,

and at the Bala Hissar was joined by—

129 Rifles 2nd Gurkhas . . . .	Captain W. Hill,
2 Screw Guns . . . . .	Lieutenant A. F. Liddell,
85 Sabres 3rd Punjab Cavalry . . .	Lieutenant L. S. H. Baker.

His instructions were to drive off the enemy, and, that accomplished, to return to Kabul, bringing with him Jenkins's force, whilst Hugh Gough who followed in support, with—

4 Guns Royal Horse Artillery,
1 Troop 9th Lancers,
2 Squadrons 17th Bengal Cavalry,
1 Wing 28th Punjab Infantry,

was directed to await orders at Ben-i-Hissar.

<sup>1</sup> "Since the anxious days of December, no such excitement had been felt in Sherpur as that of yesterday morning, when it became known that the Highlanders and Guides were hotly engaged beyond the Sang-i-Nawishta defile, and that General Macpherson was ordered to march to their assistance." (Hensman, p. 380.)

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Marching rapidly, Macpherson's troops emerged about noon from the Sang-i-Nawishta Gorge, and, leaving two companies of the 45th Sikhs to hold the defile, pressed on towards a low ridge which crossed the valley at right angles to the road, from the summit of which, illumined by the bright spring sunshine, a strangely beautiful view opened out before them. Below, almost within rifle shot, a long, thin line of British and Native soldiers, in front and at either end of which, clouds of Afghan skirmishers swarmed and buzzed; above, the slopes of the hills, crowded with tribesmen, clustering round scores of gaudy standards; little puffs of smoke from rifle and matchlock floating in the air, or clinging to bushes and fruit trees; shells from the artillery guns flying over the heads of friends to burst among hidden foes; behind the guns, a group of tired horsemen, motionless, watchful, alert; and near at hand, behind a sheltering hill, the laden baggage animals and their anxious drivers.

At a glance Macpherson took in all the military features of the scene, and without a pause moved on towards Charasiab, the Gurkhas under Captain Hill searching the enclosures and irrigated ground ahead, and rejoining the column as it issued from a screen of willow trees, about eleven hundred yards from the centre of Jenkins's position. Macpherson's first act, as Commander of the whole force, was to order Jenkins's baggage back to Sherpur; his second, to examine carefully the enemy's position and decide upon attacking the Afghan left and rolling it up, a movement which, if successful, must leave their centre entirely exposed. To Jenkins, who had now joined him, he explained his plan; but, when the former assured him that with a little assistance he could break up the enemy in his front, he modified it so far as to reinforce his subordinate with three companies of the 45th Sikhs, under Colonel Armstrong, cautioning him, at the same time, not to move until the right attack had been fully developed.

The Gurkhas were quickly engaged with the enemy, the 92nd

Highlanders supporting them on the left ; they, in their turn, being covered by the 45th Sikhs ; and the screw and mountain guns, 600 yards in the rear, protecting the whole advance. Among the many standards dotting the terraced fields to the south of Charasiab, one, conspicuous by its central position and gaudy colouring, caught Macpherson's eye, and he sent his orderly officer, Captain A. D. McGregor, to tell Hill to make straight for it and take the position with the bayonet. Hill shouted the General's orders to his men, and in a moment the Gurkhas, abandoning cover, rushed forward and flung themselves on the Afghans, who broke and fled, leaving the flag in the victors' hands. Following up their success, the Gurkhas now drove the whole of the enemy's left wing up the hills overlooking the hamlets of Charasiab ; and, whilst the Highlanders cleared the numerous orchards in which his skirmishers had established themselves, Jenkins, seeing that the moment for him to take action had come, fell upon the tribesmen on his left and in his front ; Armstrong, with two companies of the Guides, supported by three companies of the 45th Sikhs, storming the heights to the east of the British position, and the wing of the 92nd Highlanders and the residue of the Guides falling upon the tribesmen holding the plain and hills to the south. At sight of hill and vale swarming with fugitives, the Cavalry and Horse Artillery galloped forward in hot pursuit, following the flying foe for four miles up the Logar Valley, whilst Macpherson cleared them out of the hills in which they had taken refuge, and drove them, disorganized, into the Chardeh Valley ; then, making a *détour*, he returned through Childukhteran to the British camp, where by 4 p.m. the whole of his and Jenkins's troops had reassembled, and where, on arriving from Sherpur a little later, Sir Frederick Roberts congratulated them in person on their good day's work. The order to retire was then given, and by 8 p.m. the united forces marched into Cantonments.

Macpherson estimated that the Afghans had lost two hundred



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killed, and that they had probably a much larger number wounded. The British losses are shown in the following table :—

## COLONEL JENKINS'S FORCE.

### F-A ROYAL ARTILLERY.

Wounded	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1 man.
"	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1 follower.

### GUIDES CAVALRY.

Killed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
Wounded	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	13

### WING 92ND HIGHLANDERS.

Wounded	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
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### GUIDES INFANTRY.

Killed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Wounded	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	9

## GENERAL MACPHERSON'S FORCE.

### No. 2 MOUNTAIN BATTERY.

Wounded	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
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### WING 92ND HIGHLANDERS.

Killed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Wounded	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3

### 45TH SIKHS.

Wounded	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
---------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

### TOTAL LOSSES.

4 men killed, 34 wounded.

10 horses <sup>1</sup> killed, 8 wounded.

Meanwhile Ross, to protect whose rear Jenkins had run the risk of being himself overwhelmed, had accomplished the object for which he had been sent out. Leaving Maidan on the 21st, he marched

<sup>1</sup> Including 4 officers' chargers.

five miles to Killa Durain, and the next day nine miles to Sir-i-tup; and on the way thither, whilst the head of the column was halting on some high ground that overlooked a long stretch of valley leading up to the Sher-i-Dahan (Lion's mouth) Pass, a bright light flashing from its summit told that Sir Donald Stewart's Division, of which for many days there had been no news, was safe and near at hand. Captain E. Straton quickly got his own heliographic instrument to work, and when his message had been acknowledged there followed, letter by letter, Stewart's Despatch, telling of his successful march and giving details of the action at Ahmed Khel.<sup>1</sup> This was at once sent off to Kabul, and, thence, telegraphed to Simla and repeated to England. The story told in it was one to fill men's minds, both in India and at home, with pride in their countrymen's courage and endurance; but, arriving in England at a time when the country was in the bustle and turmoil of a general election, it attracted very little attention.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. The second action of Charasiab emphasizes the truth so frequently insisted on in these pages, that it is bad strategy to isolate a small body of troops at a long distance from support. Jenkins's Force was little stronger than a Battalion of British infantry brought up to its war strength; his camp was pitched twelve and a half miles from its base, and divided from it by the dangerous Sang-i-Nawishta defile and the city of Kabul, whose turbulent inhabitants would have tried to cut his line of retreat if the garrison of Sherpur had been occupied in defending itself against the Kohistanis. It was necessary to protect Ross's rear, but this should not have

<sup>1</sup> "The distance heliographed this day was considerable, being upwards of fifty miles, the instrument working on the hill commanding the Sher-i-Dahn Pass, above Ghazni." (Duke, p. 323.)

been done by sending the supporting column to Charasiab, twenty-one miles from Maidan, with a high, rugged range of hills and the Kabul River between the two camps, but to the Argandeh Pass. Established there, no enemy would have dared to penetrate between two British forces only seven miles apart, and not only would Jenkins's line of retreat have been assured, but he would have been well placed to co-operate with Roberts in the event of the Kohistanis attacking Sherpur. A glance at the strategical map, Chapter XVII.,<sup>1</sup> will show how impossible it would have been for Jenkins to prevent Mahomed Hassan cutting Ross's communications, if the Afghan General had elected to go forward instead of falling back; how great the risk to which he would have exposed his troops, if he had attempted to follow the Logaris into Maidan.

OBSERVATION II. The second action of Charasiab was a brilliant affair, most creditable to the commanders and troops; but the excellent tactics which turned what might have been defeat into success, do not excuse the false strategy, which compelled Jenkins to fight at so great a disadvantage.

<sup>1</sup> Page 174.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### Sir Donald Stewart's Last Days in Kandahar

FOR two days after receiving the order to stand fast at Kandahar, Sir Donald Stewart was left without any official information as to the events which had brought about so great a change in the plans of the Government of India; but rumours current in the bazaars of a military revolt at Kabul, of which both Cavagnari and the Amir had been the victims, prepared him for the news of the massacre of the British Mission, which reached him on the 7th of September, 1879. The troops on the spot at once returned to cantonments; the regiments on the way to Quetta, hastily recalled, marched in on the 8th, and everything in and about the city soon wore its usual aspect, except that the Afghan Governor, Sher Ali, continued to occupy the citadel, where he had taken up his residence on its evacuation by the British troops.

Foreseeing that he would be called upon to play a part in whatever plans the Indian Government might be devising, Sir Donald went quickly to work to prepare his Division to take the field by laying in stores of grain and bhusa, and looking carefully to the efficiency of his transport. The expected order, sent off by the Commander-in-Chief on his own responsibility, arrived within a week. It bade Stewart prepare a force of such strength as he might deem needful, but including heavy guns, to march to Khelat-i-Ghilzai and from thence threaten Ghazni, thus diverting the Ghilzais' attention from the Shutargardan and lessening the risks, to which Roberts must be exposed in crossing that pass and advancing down the Logar Valley. In sanctioning this movement, the Government directed

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that the force to be employed should consist of three battalions of infantry in addition to artillery and cavalry; that it should be provided with four weeks' supplies, and that the demonstration towards Ghazni should be converted into a real movement upon that city, with a view to its capture and occupation. The scheme was a wild one, altogether out of proportion to the strength of the force assigned for its execution, and Stewart cannot have been sorry that lack of the transport required for the carrying of the supplies demanded by it, should have compelled its abandonment.

The Expeditionary Force consisted of

### ARTILLERY.

2 Guns G-4 Royal Artillery	Major Sir J. W. Campbell, Bart.
3 Guns (Mountain) 11-11 Royal Artillery,	Major N. H. Harris.
2 Guns (Heavy) 6-11 Royal Artillery	Major J. A. Tillard.

### CAVALRY.

2nd Punjab Cavalry	Colonel T. G. Kennedy.
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### INFANTRY.

59th Foot	Lieutenant-Colonel J. Lawson.
3rd Gurkhas	Colonel A. Patterson.
29th Bombay Infantry (2nd Baluchis)	Lieutenant-Colonel O. V. Tanner.

Total strength—7 guns, 1,418 men, and 1,286 camp-followers.

The Column, which was commanded by Brigadier-General R. J. Hughes, left Kandahar on the 23rd September and arrived unopposed at Khelat-i-Ghilzai. Here Hughes remained inactive, whilst his agents were trying to get in supplies, till on the 14th of October, two days after Sir F. Roberts's public entry into Kabul, he received orders to reconnoitre a few marches ahead. Leaving Colonel Tanner with two companies 59th Foot, the 2nd Baluchis (less one hundred rifles), one troop 2nd Punjab Cavalry, and the two 40-pounders to hold the place, he marched towards Ghazni with the remainder of the troops. Once again there was no active opposition, but the



temper of the people was hostile and their attitude unsettled. At Tazi, thirty miles from Khelat-i-Ghilzai, where he halted several days, Hughes learned that Sahib Jan, a noted freebooter, son of an influential Ghilzai Chief, at the head of a considerable gathering of tribesmen, was at Ghujan ready to dispute his advance. Judging it inexpedient to fall back before this menace, the British Commander determined to take the offensive. He knew that a portion of Sahib Jan's force was at Shahjui, twelve and a half miles north-east of Tazi, and reckoned that, if he could surprise and surround the village before daybreak, all its occupants would fall into his hands. Accordingly at 1.30 a.m., on the 23rd of October, he sent off Colonel Kennedy with two mountain guns, a hundred and fifty sabres 2nd Punjab Cavalry, eighty rifles 59th Foot, and a hundred Baluchis, with orders to push forward as rapidly as the rugged nature of the country would permit, he himself, with the remaining troops, following in support. The advanced guard had covered about ten miles when the guide, a friendly Ghilzai Mallik, called Kennedy's attention to a light at some distance ahead and warned him that it was the watch-fire of the enemy's outlying picket, posted two miles in advance of Shahjui to give notice of an enemy's approach. This precaution left Kennedy but one chance of surprising the village, and that was to kill or capture the entire picket, and this he determined to attempt. Darkness favoured the enterprise, and Captain J. H. Broome, with a squadron of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry and a detachment of the Baluchis, would have carried it to a successful conclusion if, just at the last, by some mistake, the Infantry had not fired into the outpost. The Cavalry instantly galloped forward and succeeded in cutting down five men; but the remainder of the picket though pursued for more than a mile, made good its escape to Shahjui. Aroused by the arrival of the fugitives, Sahib Jan's followers, some two hundred horse and seven hundred foot, streamed out of the village, evidently with the intention of attacking Broome, who, on halting, had taken up a position on

a low hill to await the arrival of the infantry and guns. Fortunately these were not far behind, and, at sight of them, the Ghilzais came to a standstill and, on Kennedy's throwing forward the 59th Foot and bringing the guns into action, retreated to the north of the village. The cavalry and guns were let loose in pursuit, the orders to their commander, Major F. Lance, being not to charge unless compelled to do so, but to manœuvre on the enemy's flank in such wise as to break up their formation and give time for the infantry to get within rifle range. In the running fight that followed, the guns occasionally fired a few rounds, and the cavalry, from time to time, dismounted and used their carbines ; but, vigorously as the pursuit was pressed, the Ghilzais at last got so far ahead that they were able to re-form behind a hill, on and around which they took up a very strong position. On the summit, approached over rough and difficult ground and crowned by the ruins of an old fort, some Ghazis, prepared, as Ghazis always are prepared, to die at their post, had planted two standards ; the main body of the footmen held a ruined outwork at the southern base of the hill ; and in its rear the horsemen were drawn up ready to sally forth when their leader should judge that the moment for an attack had arrived. Lance had just time to place one of his two squadrons, under Captain Broome, facing the enemy's position, and to echelon the second squadron to cover the exposed flank of the first, when the Ghilzai cavalry, led by Sahib Jan in person, dashed out from behind the hill and galloped down upon Broome, who, falling back in accordance with his instructions, drew them into the open, and then, facing about charged home, Lance, at the same moment, falling on their flank. A hand-to-hand fight, fierce but short, ensued, and when the Ghilzais took to flight they left their leader and fourteen of their comrades dead on the field. Broome, who had himself cut down two of them, was badly wounded in the hand and had his horse killed under him. Seeing the defeat of their cavalry, the footmen at the base of the hill dispersed, and so rough was the ground that no

pursuit was attempted, and they made good their escape, carrying off with them their wounded, among them Sahib Jan's brother, Sher Jan.

When the guns and infantry came up, Kennedy sent Captain A. Gaselee to find out whether the summit of the hill was still held. Gaselee took with him his Native orderly, and half-way up the slope the quick ears of the latter caught the sound of voices and he motioned to his officer not to go further. Gaselee soon satisfied himself that the man was right, and, on hearing his report, Kennedy ordered Captain E. H. Sartorius to clear the hill with his company of the 59th Foot. Climbing slowly up the zigzag path at the head of some twenty men, the remainder of the company following to keep down the Ghazis' fire, Sartorius had just set foot on the summit of the hill when its seven defenders flung themselves upon him, wounding him severely in both hands and killing the soldier at his side. A moment later, they were overpowered and cut down, dying bravely at their post. For his gallant leadership in this affair, Sartorius received the Victoria Cross.

The Ghilzai losses in the above movement, beginning with the attack on the picket to the south of Shahjui and ending with the capture of the hill to the north of that village, were very heavy, no less than fifty-six bodies being counted on the field. The British losses, which fell almost entirely on the cavalry, were also heavy.

*Killed.*

1 Private . . . . . 59th Foot.

*Wounded.*

Captain E. H. Sartorius . . . . . 59th Foot.  
 Captain J. H. Broome . . . . . 2nd Punjab Cavalry.  
 Two Native Officers . . . . . " " "  
 Twenty-seven men . . . . . " " "

*HORSES.*

4 killed. 12 wounded.

Total Casualties—4 officers, 28 men, 16 horses.

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On this occasion fairly accurate information of the enemy's position and plans had been obtained ; and the result of the action, the success of which was due, in part, to General Hughes and Colonel Kennedy's promptitude and, in part, to the admirable way in which Major Lance and Captain Broome handled their two squadrons of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, was less barren than is usually the case with fighting in Afghanistan, for large bodies of tribesmen on their way to join Sahib Jan, dispersed on hearing of his defeat and death.

On the return march to Shahjui, Kennedy met the main body of the Brigade and returned with it to Tazi. The demonstration had served its purpose, and in obedience to orders from Head-Quarters the troops withdrew to Khelat-i-Ghilzai on the 29th of October, and on the 2nd of November, leaving Tanner to hold the fortress with

2 Guns G-4 Royal Artillery,  
2 Mountain Guns 11-11 Royal Artillery,  
1 Squadron 2nd Punjab Cavalry,  
2 Companies 59th Foot,  
29th Bombay Infantry (2nd Baluchis),

Hughes marched for Kandahar, where he arrived on the 8th.

Life was dull in Kandahar after the excitement of settling down into the old quarters had died away.<sup>1</sup> During the autumn and early winter, the officers could do something to lessen the disappointment of the men, sent back to exile just as they thought they had escaped from it, by taking parties of them down to the river, on the banks of which pleasant hours were spent in fishing and shooting ; but when, towards the end of January, first rain and then snow began to fall, this amusement came to an end ; and, at the same time, much

<sup>1</sup> "Here we are dull to a degree. Everybody is disappointed at not getting away from Afghanistan." (*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 291.)

"It is strange how everyone longs to get away. So long as there is any excitement officers and men are happy enough, but they are sick of idleness and want of society. I am as sick as anyone can be of it, but I have fortunately little time to think about such things, and that keeps me going." (*Ibid.* pp. 298, 299.)

useful work which had given employment to many—construction of roads, planting of trees, laying out of gardens, building a wall round the camp to keep off robbers<sup>1</sup>—had to be suspended, and, in enforced idleness, the longing for home and a more social life grew stronger from day to day.

The Viceroy and the Military Authorities asked nothing better than to be able to gratify this longing, but plan and work as they might, they found it a harder task to withdraw from Afghanistan than to invade it. They could not march out and leave chaos behind them, and there seemed no stable elements out of which to construct a Native Government strong enough to maintain itself without British support; or, rather, several Native Governments, for the scheme of breaking up Afghanistan, favoured from the first by Lord Lytton, had been finally adopted by the Indian and British Governments. A ruler for Southern Afghanistan was ready to hand in the person of the Governor of Kandahar, Sirdar Sher Ali; but with what authority he should be invested, over what area that authority should extend, and in what relations his new State should stand towards India, remained to be determined. Consulted on these points, Sir Donald Stewart gave it as his opinion that the territory to be allotted to Sher Ali, for whom he suggested the title of Wali, should include the Province of Kandahar proper—excluding the assigned districts of Pishin and Sibi, and possibly that part of Seistan watered only by the Helmand—the district of Khelat-i-Ghilzai, the districts of Pusht-i-Rud and Zemindawar, and the district of Farah, of all of which only a small portion was cultivated or, indeed, cultivable; the whole covering about 70,000 square miles, supporting somewhere between half a million and a million of inhabitants, and yielding a revenue of about £200,000. As regarded the measure of authority

<sup>1</sup> “They are the boldest rascals in the world. Some men got into my garden through a drain a few days ago, and carried off all my Durbar carpets, about 400 rupees’ worth.” (*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 293.)



to be conceded to the ruler of the proposed State, Sir D. Stewart recommended that the only limitation to be placed upon it should be in respect to foreign relations, which should be wholly conducted through a Representative of Her Majesty's Government, with the possible exception of those to be established and maintained with any Native State which might be formed at Kabul. He further advised that the Wali's military force should be limited in numbers, and at the disposal of the Government of India for the defence of Kandahar against external enemies; that for the support of any British force which it might be deemed necessary to keep in his country, he should contribute a fixed subsidy in coin or, preferably, in grain; that commercial arrangements be the subject of mutual agreement at stated intervals; and that, for the time being, he should not be expected to contribute to the expense of constructing railways and telegraphs through any part of his territory. Sir Donald further recommended that the British force to be maintained in Southern Afghanistan should be located in a cantonment to be formed near Kandahar; not in the citadel, or within a stone's throw of its gates, lest the Wali's independence should seem doubtful to himself and his subjects, but at some point not more than twenty and not less than five miles from its walls.

On the question of the political control of the new State, he was very decided:—

"I think," so he wrote, "that the safest plan will be to follow the ordinary precedent by keeping the political and military authority in separate hands, except on those special occasions when important military operations are in actual progress. From certain points of view it would, no doubt, be convenient to entrust both duties to the same individual, and officers are, no doubt, to be found equally competent for both; but, in practice, it might, I feel sure, be productive of gross evils if our political relations with the country were to fall into the management of any officer who might chance to fall

into the military command. . . . The maintenance of satisfactory relations with the ruler of Kandahar and the attitude of the Afghan authorities towards the British officers entrusted with the conduct of affairs in Southern Afghanistan will, in a very great measure, depend on the personal qualifications of the officer who may be appointed by Government to hold chief political authority in that quarter. . . . It is of the last importance that the officer selected for this duty should be thoroughly well qualified to deal with the Afghan authorities, whether as regards his knowledge of the Persian language, his political experience, or his capabilities for obtaining and retaining the friendship, confidence, and respect of those with whom he has to deal." <sup>1</sup>

Had it been intended that the command of the troops to be left in Southern Afghanistan should remain with the writer of these remarks, there would have been no question of separating the political from the military power ; but it had been decided that Stewart and his Division should leave Kandahar as early as possible in the coming year, troops from Bombay taking their place, and all through the autumn and winter strenuous efforts were being made to prepare for the impending change.

In October, the Government of India gave a tardy assent to the construction of a railway from Sukkur on the Indus to Sibi at the foot of the Afghan hills, and the work was immediately put in hand. It presented no great engineering difficulties, but the arrangements for housing, feeding, and watering five thousand labourers and two thousand beasts of burden in a perfectly barren desert, called for the highest administrative ability, and that this was not wanting is proved by the fact that the line was ready for locomotive traffic on the 27th of January, 1880.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, pp. 10, 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> "The execution of 133½ miles of railway in 101 days, or at an average progress of 1½ miles per day, is a feat worthy of mention, and was only possible

One great work naturally suggests another, so, before a third of the Sukkur-Sibi railway had been completed, Sir Richard Temple, Governor of Bombay, went up to Kandahar to discuss with Sir D. Stewart and Colonel J. G. Lindsay, the Superintendent Engineer, the question of extending it to Quetta and, ultimately, to Kandahar. All agreed that the safety and well-being of a British Force permanently established in Southern Afghanistan called for such an extension, and as Sir Donald Stewart and Colonel Sandeman, the Governor-General's Agent in Baluchistan, were opposed to any attempt to utilize the Bolan for such a scheme, traffic through that pass being subject to frequent interruptions by snow and flood, it was decided to carry the proposed railway through Harnai to Gwal in the Pishin Valley, and, with a view to facilitating the work and hastening the abandonment of the Bolan, to construct a good cart road parallel with its alignment. To forestall any opposition that the tribes along the proposed route might be tempted to offer to the violation of their territories, Sandeman's personal escort at once occupied Thal, in the very centre of the possible area of disturbance ; and on the 23rd of December, a Brigade, under Brigadier-General G. R. S. Burrows, consisting of two mountain guns, three companies Sappers and Miners, and three Bombay Native Infantry regiments, was ordered to proceed to the same place for the purpose of making and protecting the new road. This movement formed part of the general scheme, just approved by the Indian Government, for the withdrawal of the Bengal troops from Southern Afghanistan and the location, in the new state, of a Bombay Division, the troops belonging under the most perfect system of organisation in every detail of the operations. Yet, so ably conceived were all the arrangements for the regular and orderly supply, whether of railway material, or of food, water, fuel, and shelter, for the labourers and staff, during the fifty working days occupied in carrying the railway over the ninety-three miles of inhospitable desert, that practically no special inconvenience was experienced, and from first to last the work progressed with the utmost regularity and mechanical precision." (*Ways and Works in India*, by G. W. Macgregor, M.I.C.E., pp. 398, 399.)

to which were to be pushed up as fast as shipping could be provided to transport them to Karachi, whilst, to support this advanced force, a Reserve Division, with Head-Quarters at Bombay, was to be distributed among convenient points—Jacobabad, Sukkur, Hyderabad, Karachi, and Bombay.

The general control of both Divisions was vested in Lieutenant-General J. M. Primrose; the First, the constitution of which is given below, being under his immediate personal command—the command of its Infantry Brigades falling to G. R. S. Burrows and H. F. Brooke, and that of its Cavalry Brigade to T. Nuttall. The line of communications between Sukkur and Kandahar was placed in charge of Major-General R. Phayre, who, after the departure of Sir D. Stewart, was to command the garrison of Kandahar, pending the arrival of Primrose. The Bombay Government was to supervise the supply and transport arrangements of the troops in Southern Afghanistan; the Commander-in-Chief of that Presidency was to decide all questions of discipline and to conduct all correspondence connected with clothing, ammunition, and the medical services; the Commander-in-Chief in India was to issue all orders pertaining to tactical and strategical movements; and the political authority in the new State was to be exercised by Major St. John, who, as Stewart's political assistant, was the person best qualified to carry on his policy.<sup>1</sup>

#### FIRST DIVISION.

E-B Royal Horse Artillery.

C-D Royal Artillery. Two guns to Khelat-i-Ghilzai to relieve the two guns of G-4 R.A.

5-8 Royal Artillery (Mountain). Ditto 11-11 R.A.

5-11 Royal Artillery (Heavy Battery).

<sup>1</sup> "General Primrose is to succeed me here. . . . He is not to have political authority. St. John remains in independent political charge. The arrangement is a very good one, as General Primrose knows nothing of what has been done here, and he could hardly carry out my policy without understanding it. St. John, on the other hand, has worked with me from the first, and the Government has adopted all my resolutions in bulk." (*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 315.)

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## 1ST INFANTRY BRIGADE.

66th Foot. Two Companies to Khelat-i-Ghilzai to relieve 59th Foot.  
1st Bombay Grenadiers.  
19th Bombay Infantry.

## 2ND INFANTRY BRIGADE.

7th Fusiliers.  
29th Bombay Infantry, garrisoning Khelat-i-Ghilzai.  
30th Bombay Infantry.

## CAVALRY BRIGADE.

Poona Horse.  
3rd Sind Horse. One Squadron to Khelat-i-Ghilzai.

## RESERVE DIVISION.

JACOBABAD . . . . .	{ 1st Sind Horse. 2nd Bombay Light Cavalry. 3rd   "       "       " 2 Companies 9th Bombay Infantry. 23rd Bombay Infantry.
SUKKUR . . . . .	{ F-2 Royal Artillery. Wing 2-11th Foot. 24th Bombay Infantry.
HYDERABAD . . . . .	{ D-B Royal Horse Artillery. 2-15th Foot. 3rd Bombay Infantry.
KARACHI . . . . .	{ 9th       "       " Head-Quarters and Wing 2-11th Foot.
BOMBAY . . . . .	

^ All these preliminary arrangements had been decided on and put in train by the end of the year, and on the 3rd of January, Stewart was ordered to mobilize his Division and report what carriage and supplies he could procure locally, and to what extent both would have to be supplemented from India in order to secure the mobility of his troops. In his reply Sir D. Stewart pointed out that it would not be easy to submit an estimate of his requirements until he had been furnished with full details regarding the proposed operations, and the time at which reliefs might be expected to reach Kandahar.



So far, owing to the difficulty of providing forage, purchases of transport animals had only been made to replace casualties. He thought that he could obtain a thousand or fifteen hundred camels locally; with the season for snowstorms just beginning, however, the present seemed a bad time for marching to Ghazni.

On this point he was quickly reassured. In its next communication the Government informed him that there was no intention of beginning the projected movement before the spring, and the 21st of March, the date suggested by Sir Donald himself, was the one provisionally adopted.

As regarded reliefs, the Commander-in-Chief was anxious that they should reach Kandahar as early as possible, but the usual paucity of transport—the beasts of burden that ought to have been available had been transferred to the Khyber—and heavy snowfalls at many points, were greatly delaying the upward movement of troops. At Chaman, at the foot of the Khojak Pass, snow lay three feet deep, and in the Bolan, where men and beasts, crowded together, blocked each other's advance, numbers were dying of cold.<sup>1</sup> The severity of the weather abated at the end of the first week of February, but snow again fell heavily on the 13th, 14th, and 16th, and it was not till the 20th that the 19th Punjab Infantry and the 2nd Sikhs arrived at Kandahar from Pishin, where they had been replaced by troops from Bombay.

Whilst the Commander-in-Chief was doing all in his power to concentrate a Bombay Division at Kandahar, Sir Donald Stewart was endeavouring to organize an efficient transport train for the

<sup>1</sup> "We are lucky in being so low, for at Chaman there is three feet of snow and it is still falling;—what it is at Quetta and the Khojak I don't know, but the Bombay troops coming up will know what winter means in this country." (*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 307.)

"I warned the Bombay Government against crowding so many animals into the (Bolan) Pass; but they would not take the warning, and they are losing men and cattle by death from sheer cold." (*Ibid.* p. 309.)

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long march that lay before him. Disappointed in his hope of adding to his stock of animals by purchase on the spot—a drought in the Kandahar district had driven away most of the camels that had survived the first phase of the war, and though owners were willing to hire out, at exorbitant rates, the few that had not been removed, they could not be induced to sell them—he had to fall back upon his existing transport, the greater part of which had been for some time engaged in bringing up the reliefs. As these came in, he retained at Kandahar all animals belonging to the Government, except those employed in carrying treasure and military stores, and used only hired cattle for the conveyance of regimental baggage and commissariat stores. To facilitate the transport arrangements under this system he divided his line of communications into four sections, each with its appropriate kind of carriage :—

Section I. Sukkur to Sibi—The new railway.

Section II. Sibi to Quetta—Brahui camels.

Section III. Quetta to Abdulla Khan—Carts supplemented by Pishin camels.

Section IV. Abdulla Khan to Kandahar—Pishin and Kandahar camels, and donkeys.

This plan called for a great deal of extra labour in the transferring and remaking of loads—loads suitable to one kind of carriage being unsuited to another—but no better could have been devised, and on the whole it worked well. ✓

Major-General Phayre arrived at Kandahar, with 5-11 Royal Artillery and the 1st Bombay Infantry, on the 9th of March; and on the 18th, Sir D. Stewart reported for the information of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief that the preparation of the Ghazni Field Force would be completed on the 25th, by which date a sufficient number of Bombay troops would have reached Kandahar to admit of his beginning the march to Kabul.

In a letter written on the 13th of March to Sher Ali, Lord Lytton

had announced that the Queen-Empress had been pleased to recognize him as independent ruler of the province of Kandahar, the limits of which had yet to be defined ; that for the consolidation of his power and the proper guardianship of the frontiers of her Majesty's Empire, a British Force would remain in a cantonment at, or near, his capital, for the maintenance of which he would be expected to allow a portion of the grain revenue of the country ; and that a special officer of rank would be deputed to reside in the cantonment as a medium of friendly communication, and to conduct the relations of the British Government with the States upon His Highness's frontier.<sup>1</sup>

It may be doubted whether Sher Ali would have been selected for the position, to which the British Government had decided to raise him, if they could have found a stronger man willing to accept it at their hands. Sir Donald Stewart had, at first, little confidence in his good faith, and, to the last, though he grew to have a strong personal liking for him, he had reason to doubt his possessing the qualities requisite in the ruler of a turbulent people. When two Kabuli regiments, the one fully equipped, the other without arms, arrived at Kandahar, Sher Ali was greatly alarmed and hastened to banish the former to the Argandab district ; and when his own contingent mutinied, he applied to the British Commander for help in reducing it to obedience, and only dealt with it himself when Sir Donald peremptorily refused to employ British troops in coercing his refractory subjects.<sup>2</sup> " Seeing that I am resolute on this point," wrote Stewart to his wife, " he does not now trouble me ; but, if I once took part in their internal squabbles, I should lose my prestige

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> " The Sirdar here has more than once tried to get assistance from me in the shape of troops for the purpose of coercing refractory subjects, but I have uniformly told him that a man who is fit to rule here must trust to himself when his own subjects are concerned." (*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 311.)

as a friend of the nation, and be looked on as a mere partisan of the Sirdar's. By taking up this position, and sticking to it under all circumstances, the people are beginning to believe in me. They could not for a long time understand my ways ; and I daresay they thought me a very deep schemer ; but when they find I am consistent, I shall have my reward in their good-will."<sup>1</sup>

His farewell durbar, held on the 15th of March, afforded Stewart gratifying proof of that good-will. In his speech on that occasion, after announcing his approaching departure, he referred sternly to the many outrages committed on his soldiers and camp-followers ; and, at its conclusion, one of the priests present rose to repudiate all responsibility for deeds contrary to the law of Mahomed, and to offer to the retiring British Commander the grateful thanks of the people of Kandahar for the manner in which, from first to last, he had ruled over them. Those thanks were well deserved. Following closely in the footsteps of his great predecessor, Sir William Nott, Sir Donald Stewart had never stooped to acts of cruelty or indiscriminate severity ; and his humanity and good sense had kept a turbulent city quiet and prosperous, and the surrounding country generally peaceful. Only the district under his immediate influence, however—everywhere else in Afghanistan a state of anarchy prevailed. A few days after the durbar, the Zemindawaris attacked a body of Sher Ali's troops, knocking over some of his officers and killing a number of his men ; a little earlier, in the opposite direction, near Khelat-i-Ghilzai, a raiding party had pounced upon a convoy of mules, and but that Colonel Tanner's troops were on the alert, would have captured and carried it off ; and in the background a more serious danger than these local disturbances threatened the State which the British Government was about to call into existence, and the garrison which was to be its defence. Rumours had reached Stewart in December that Ayub

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 311.

Khan, brother of the deposed Amir and Governor of Herat, was meditating an advance on Kandahar. His force was known to be a large one ; but, as the Herati and Kabuli regiments of which it was composed were said to be bitterly opposed to each other, many persons believed that there was little chance of their being induced to act together. Stewart must have taken a less sanguine view of what the future might have in store for him or his successor, since, in communicating the news to the Commander-in-Chief, he recommended that supplies should be collected along the road to Girishk, and proposed, in the event of a movement towards the Helmand becoming necessary, to call up the 19th Punjab Infantry, the 2nd Sikhs, and 2nd Sind Horse, replacing them in Pishin by Bombay troops employed in improving the road in the Bolan. Sir Frederick Haines approved of an occupation of Girishk, and thought that Stewart's force at Kandahar should be reinforced by a British regiment and a battery of artillery in addition to the troops mentioned by Stewart ; but the Viceroy, though agreeing to the proposed collection of supplies, saw no reason for a movement towards Girishk, nor yet for a strengthening of the Kandahar garrison, and deprecated any premature advance of Bombay troops calculated to interfere with work in the Bolan. As a matter of fact, shortly after the news which led to Stewart's suggestion had been received in Kandahar, Ayub Khan's agents did start for Farah, midway between Girishk and Herat, to collect supplies for his projected march ; and, though nothing came of their preparations at the time, the threatened movement was not abandoned, only delayed.

Sir Donald Stewart had formally bidden farewell to his temporary subjects on the 15th of March ; on the 18th, he had reported that his force would be ready to march on the 25th, yet not till the 28th, the day before his advance began, did he receive any information as to the Government's plans for himself and his troops, and then it came in the shape of a telegram announcing that a column from



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Kabul was to meet him at Ghazni. The long telegram which Sir Donald sent in reply, brings out so strongly his knowledge of the conditions under which war is carried on in Afghanistan, and his desire to press as lightly as possible on the scanty resources of her people, that it deserves to be given in full :—

“I am not in possession of the orders of the Government, nor have I received the programme for field operations now being commenced, but I would point out that I am carrying forward from here supplies for two months (for European troops) and that I shall not require to draw more European supplies from India by Kabul or Kuram until the end of May. If it is intended that the Division under my command move forward beyond Ghazni towards Kuram, supplies should be collected at some place in Kuram, where the troops under my command may pass the remainder of the hot weather. By the information which I have received, no opposition is likely to be encountered at Ghazni which may not be easily overcome by the troops with which I am advancing. The movement of a column from Kabul to meet the Division under my command will, in my opinion, increase the strain upon the country which the demands of this Division for Native supplies must entail. The collection of tribesmen under Mahomed Jan and Mushk-i-Alam have already drawn largely upon the supplies which are procurable in the neighbourhood of Ghazni, and the uncertainty which prevails throughout the country has doubtless prevented large areas from being cultivated this spring. It is only with difficulty that sufficient transport has been obtained to allow of the Division under my command being moved with full equipment, and I am calculating on replacing casualties among baggage animals by purchases made at Ghazni. I submit for consideration that it is very desirable that no movement of troops belonging to Kabul or the Kuram command should be made in advance of Kushi. I have this morning received a telegram from Sir F. Roberts that he only proposes to supply for my Division at

Ghazni, tea, sugar, and possibly rum, and that for all other supplies I must depend upon the country. I hope it will be understood that I do not require any supplies to be advanced from Kabul to meet me ; and that, if orders are given for my Division to remain at Ghazni, I would at once establish communication with Kabul or Kuram, as may be desired, sending my own transport to bring forward necessary supplies. I make this statement, not with a view of disturbing any approved plan of operations, but in order that there may be no misconception regarding the difficulty of feeding a large force at Ghazni during the present season."

In a Minute addressed to the Military Secretary, Lord Lytton expressed himself unable to understand " why Sir D. Stewart had not received the programme for field operations now being commenced," but the reason is clear : many of the military details of the programme were still under consideration, and the Commander-in-Chief himself was in the dark as to the Government's political aims and intentions up to the 29th of March, when, by the direction of the Viceroy, the Military Secretary telegraphed them to him with the request that he would convey them to Sir D. Stewart.

" It is essential," so ran the message, " that General Stewart should be at once fully informed of the entire plan of operations, and of the political objects desired by the Government of India. The latter may be thus summed up : The Government is anxious to withdraw as soon as possible the troops from Kabul and from all points beyond those to be occupied under the Treaty of Gandamak, except Kandahar. In order that this may be done, it is desirable to find a ruler for Kabul, which will be separated from Kandahar. Steps are being taken for this purpose. Meanwhile it is essential that we should make such a display of strength in Afghanistan as will show that we are masters of the situation, and will overawe disaffection. But it is not desirable to spread our troops over a large tract of country, or to send small columns to any place where they would encounter

opposition, and increase the hostile feeling against us. All that is necessary from the political point of view is for General Stewart to march to Ghazni, break up any opposition he may find there, or in the neighbourhood, and open up direct communication with General Sir F. Roberts at Kabul. This he can do either by the direct route, or by Kushi, as he may think to be most expedient, under such conditions as may exist when he is at Ghazni. It is not desirable that Sir D. Stewart's troops should remain for long at Ghazni; and it is, therefore, necessary that all military dispositions should be made with a view to enabling him to leave Ghazni as soon as he has put down any open opposition that he may find there. It is very desirable that the conduct of operations in Afghanistan should, as soon as possible, be brought under one head. Sir D. Stewart should, therefore, assume the supreme command as soon as he is in direct communication with Kabul. In the meantime, he should be daily kept informed, both by the Foreign Department and by the Military Department, of all news received from Kabul, or from any part of the Khyber or Kuram lines of communication, so that he may be constantly and fully made aware of the exact state of the situation at all points."<sup>1</sup>

The views expressed in this Minute point to a change which had taken place in the Viceroy's immediate entourage. Sir George Colley, who, as his Private Secretary, had given colour and direction to his Afghan policy, had again left Calcutta, on the 28th of February, this time to take up the post of High Commissioner in South Africa;<sup>2</sup> and his successor, Colonel H. Brackenbury, had opened Lord Lytton's eyes to the folly of spreading "troops over a large tract of country," and of sending "small columns to any place where they would encounter opposition and increase the hostile feeling against us," and this awaken-

<sup>1</sup> Viceroy's Minute, dated 30th March, 1880. *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Colley, recalled by Lord Lytton after the massacre of the Kabul Mission, had returned to India in November, 1879.—H. B. H.

ing had brought with it the desire to see the conduct of operations in Northern Afghanistan put into wiser hands, than those to which it had hitherto been entrusted.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Frederick Haines telegraphed on Lord Lytton's instructions to Kandahar; but Sir D. Stewart had left that city before they were received there, and they cannot have followed him, for, at Tazi, he noted in his Diary, "No official orders from the Commander-in-Chief, so I propose to act on the Viceroy's private letter."<sup>2</sup> In the letter here alluded to, which had followed the Force to Khelat-i-Ghilzai, Lord Lytton besought Stewart not to linger at Ghazni "for any great length of time, not only on account of your supplies, but also because the sooner you effect a junction with Roberts, the sooner you will be able to exercise over the whole situation, political as well as military, in Northern Afghanistan, that individual personal direction which cannot be too promptly, or too completely, established there."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Head-Quarters Staff had also been recently strengthened by the appointment of Major-General G. R. Greaves, an officer of ability, firmness, and sound judgment, to the Adjutant-Generalship of the Army in India.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> "Tazi, 10th April." (*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 327.)

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 326.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### Sir Donald Stewart's March to Kabul

#### ACTIONS AT AHMED KHEL AND URSU

THE force with which Sir Donald Stewart had arranged to enter on his adventurous march consisted of seven thousand two hundred and forty-nine European and Native troops, seven thousand two hundred and seventy-three camp-followers, and eleven thousand and sixty-nine riding, draught, and transport animals. Its Commander's original intention had been to leave the 19th Punjab Infantry and the Heavy guns at Kandahar; but in this matter he was overruled by the Commander-in-Chief, who considered the whole Bengal Division none too large for the risks that had to be run. It was to take with it two months' supplies of food, ten days' of firewood, and livestock for the European regiments;<sup>1</sup> but only seven days' food and no firewood or livestock for the Native troops and followers, and neither fodder nor grain for the horses and cattle of all kinds; so that, practically, all the animals and the greater part of the men were, from the outset, to subsist on the country, peaceably if possible, but taking what they needed by force if the people refused to surrender the remnant of their winter stores. To spread these exactions over the largest possible area, the Division was divided into two unequal parts, the smaller of which was to march on the left bank of the Turnak, whilst the larger, split up into two Brigades, following each other at the distance

<sup>1</sup> One hundred and twenty sheep were consumed daily, and firewood at the rate of fifty maunds per diem was carried on camels.—H. B. H.



of a day's march, was to move by the direct road on the right bank of that stream. On the 27th of March, in accordance with orders issued by Sir Donald Stewart on the 23rd, Nos. 4 and 10 Companies Sappers and Miners left cantonments to improve the latter road for the passage of the Heavy Battery, and on the same day the troops that were to follow the more circuitous route, under Brigadier-General R. Barter, namely :—

4 Mountain Guns 11-11 Royal Artillery,  
1st Punjab Cavalry,  
2-60th Rifles,  
15th Sikhs,  
25th Punjab Infantry,

moved out into camp, and two days later marched for the Hotak villages of Sadu Khan, lying about eight miles to the east of Khelat-i-Ghilzai. The remainder of the troops went into camp on the 29th of March, and on the 30th—

A-B Royal Horse Artillery,  
6-11 Royal Artillery (Heavy Guns),  
19th Bengal Lancers,  
2nd Sikhs,  
Engineer Field Park,

commanded by Brigadier-General C. H. Palliser, accompanied by Sir Donald Stewart and the Head-Quarters Staff, with a Cavalry and Infantry escort, marched for Khelat-i-Ghilzai, followed the next day by—

G-4 Royal Artillery,  
59th Foot,  
3rd Gurkhas,  
19th Punjab Infantry,  
Ordnance Park,

under Brigadier-General R. J. Hughes. One of the companies of Sappers and Miners engaged in road-making was allotted to Barter's Brigade, the other to Hughes's.

Stewart and Palliser arrived at Khelat-i-Ghilzai on the 8th of April, where they opened communication with Barter, whose Brigade had reached its destination the previous day. On the 7th, all three Brigades remained stationary, awaiting the arrival of the supplies which had been ordered to follow the force, for each European regiment had only carried with it ten days' supply of food, and each Native regiment three days' supply of such necessities as could not be obtained on the line of march; a reserve of similar amount being carried by the Commissariat. To Stewart's surprise and annoyance the expected supplies failed to appear, and after some hesitation he determined to proceed without them,<sup>1</sup> though those he had with him were only just sufficient for the needs of his European troops up to the 25th of April, and for the Native troops he had never, thenceforward, two days' food in hand.<sup>2</sup>

The day's halt was taken advantage of to transfer the Heavy guns from Palliser's Brigade to Hughes's, and to weed out every weak or sickly soldier, camp-follower, and transport animal, and send them back to Kandahar. Luckily, there were not many in any one of these three categories, for notwithstanding cold, wind, and dust, both men and beasts had borne the march well. The following table shows the reduction that had taken place, but, as regards the troops, the loss had been greater than appears, for the two companies of the 59th Foot, which had formed part of the garrison of Khelat since its occupation in October, had now joined the Division, whilst, as regards followers and transport animals, the large difference was chiefly due to many of both having been left behind at Kandahar to bring up the missing supplies.

<sup>1</sup> "I am sorry to say that some things are not quite satisfactory. Our supplies have not yet all come up from Kandahar, and I am in doubt whether to go on without them, trusting to get what I want from Kabul, or wait here for a few days. I suppose it will end in my going on, as I cannot bear the idea of halting." (Letter to Lady Stewart, dated Khelat-i-Ghilzai, April 7th, 1880. *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 321.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 351.

STRENGTH OF THE GHAZNI FIELD FORCE ON THE 8TH OF APRIL,  
1880.

## TROOPS.

British Officers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	172
European Troops	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,973
Native Troops	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5,048
										<hr/>
Total of all ranks	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	7,193
Less by 56 than on leaving Kandahar.										

## CAMP-FOLLOWERS.

Public Followers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4,140
Private Followers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	692
Dhoolie-Bearers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,575
										<hr/>
Total	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6,407
Less by 866.										

## ANIMALS.

Elephants	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	11
Horses	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,853
Camels	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3,558
Mules	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,575
Ponies	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,223
Bullocks	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	499
										<hr/>
Total	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	8,719
Less by 2,350.										

The Ghazni Field Force resumed its march in the same order as before—Palliser's Brigade leading on the right bank of the Turnak, with Hughes's Brigade one march behind, and Barter's Brigade moving abreast of Palliser's on the left bank and gradually drawing nearer to it as both approached the sources of the stream. The distance between them was at no time great, and heliographic communication between the three Brigades was regularly maintained. The weather was on the whole pleasant, frosty at night, but warm and bright by day; the country for the ninety-six miles lying between Khelat and Jamrad,

where the Division was to concentrate, fairly open for a mountainous region, and the road good and firm, though intersected at some points by deep ravines, and at others by irrigation channels, which gave the Heavy guns and Baggage train a great deal of trouble.

At Shahjui, forty miles from Khelat, where Stewart and Palliser arrived on the 11th, the limits of the Province of Kandahar were reached. So far the Force had been accompanied by some of Sher Ali's officials, thanks to whose mediation provisions had been fairly abundant, though they had often to be brought in from long distances. Henceforth the march was to lie through a country whose inhabitants had concealed their stores and deserted their villages.<sup>1</sup> Even in nominally friendly territory, the Force had been shadowed by a large and ever-growing body of tribesmen, moving along the foot of a range of hills parallel to the road that Barter was following; everywhere the British scouts had been met by an enemy's scouts; and political information was unobtainable.<sup>2</sup> There had been no fighting, but at Chashma-i-Panjak, the fifth march out of Khelat-i-Ghilzai, there had been great excitement in Stewart's camp watching Barter's troops searching for the enemy, who had appeared in their front. The same tactics had been adopted by the Afghans in the first war, only then they had shadowed Sir John Keane's Force on both flanks, all the way from Kandahar to Ghazni. For those who had studied the history of that war, the whole march was full of memories. At Ghojan, Palliser pitched his camp on the very ground where the earlier British army had encamped; but whereas in July 1839 the villagers were "reaping and threshing in their fields,"<sup>3</sup> in April

<sup>1</sup> "After leaving Khelat-i-Ghilzai we found the entire country deserted; the villages for a hundred miles had been abandoned, and the people had gone, taking flocks and herds and household goods, but burying their precious things, with grain and flour, in the fields, under the hearths, or even under dung-hills, hiding them in the roofs of their houses, &c." (General Chapman in *Blackwood's Magazine* for February, 1902, p. 260.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> *A Narrative of the March and Operations of the Army of the Indus*, by Major W. Hough, p. 154.

1880 the villages, seven in number, stood silent and empty, in the midst of their budding orchards and growing crops.

The wholesale flight of the people and the ingenuity with which they had concealed the stores that they could not remove, added enormously to the difficulty of foraging; but "from the centre of newly ploughed fields, from freshly dug graves, from superincumbent dung-heaps, from the bottom of underground canals, from every conceivable and inconceivable place, large stores of grain and flour were dragged into light;"<sup>1</sup> stores not large enough, however, to allow of full rations for the camp-followers, who, for a time, had to subsist on whole grain boiled and sweetened with a little sugar.<sup>2</sup> Everywhere it was the same. At Mukur, where the Turnak has its source in a spring swarming with fish, many villages, protected by mud forts, were scattered about well-cultivated lands, whose inhabitants were reported to possess large herds of cows and flocks of sheep and pigs; but men and beasts alike had disappeared, and Palliser, who camped there on the 14th of April, had to turn his horses and cattle out to graze on the green corn. The next day, at a place called Karez-i-Oba, Barter's column joined Head-Quarters, and on the 16th, after traversing a plain intersected by deep irrigation channels and gay with many varieties of wild flowers—brightest among them a splendid scarlet tulip<sup>3</sup>—Palliser's and Barter's Brigades reached Jamrad and halted for thirty-six hours to allow Hughes's troops to come up. Here, for the first time, the Afghans who had continued to hang on the British right, showed signs of an intention to attack the camp; but on General Barter's Brigade moving out against them, they declined battle and retired in good order.

The day's rest enjoyed by two-thirds of the Ghazni Field Force at Jamrad was needed by all, from the highest to the lowest; officers and

<sup>1</sup> "Sir Donald Stewart's March from Kandahar to Kabul." *Macmillan's Magazine* for May, 1881, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Deputy-Surgeon-General A. Smith.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



men were beginning to feel the effects of the great exertions imposed on them by the necessity of literally hunting for their food,<sup>1</sup> and Sir Donald Stewart, suffering from exposure to the sun, could neither eat nor sleep.<sup>2</sup> His condition was not improved by his insisting on faring just the same as his soldiers and refusing the little comforts to which his age and his position entitled him;<sup>3</sup> and it is questionable whether a man on whose life and health so much depended, was justified in risking both, in order to set an example of hardihood and self-denial to his subordinates.

Crowds of Hazaras from the Highlands lying to the north-west of the Kandahar-Kabul road,<sup>4</sup> flocked into the British camp at Jamrad, eager to be recognized as "friends," and the next day's march revealed their conception of the use to which British protection could be put. Every house in the numerous villages dotting the well-cultivated valley lying between Jamrad and Mushaki (9 miles), had been gutted and set on fire;<sup>5</sup> even the graves of the dead had been

<sup>1</sup> "In consequence of this abandonment of the country, the Division was absolutely dependent for its daily supplies of grain, flour, wood, and forage, upon an organized system of foraging. This was carried on under the most stringent discipline. . . . Neither troops nor followers were on any account allowed to enter a village except when detailed to form part of an organized foraging party, and breaches of discipline in this matter were punished summarily by the provost-marshal." (Chapman in *Blackwood's Magazine*, p. 261.)

<sup>2</sup> "We halted to-day, a great boon to everybody. To myself it has been very grateful, for I have been very seedy for some days. I think the sun is telling on me, as I feel perfectly well in most ways, yet I cannot eat or sleep. Sitting out in the sun for hours till the tents come up is very trying." (Letter to Lady Stewart, dated April 17th, 1880, p. 329 of *Sir D. Stewart's Life*.)

<sup>3</sup> "We have given up our dooly, as an example to the rest of the force and as we are cutting down our baggage to the lowest figure. It is necessary to be particular in such matters. It is certainly not nice having to sit out for three or four hours without a particle of shelter; but as the men have to do it, we do it too." (Ibid. p. 323.)

<sup>4</sup> "Hazaras—a tribe who inhabit the mountain country between Kabul and Herat. . . . There are few nations in the world whose dwellings are at a higher elevation." (Sir Charles Macgregor.)

<sup>5</sup> "Our friends the Hazaras are taking advantage of our presence to burn down all the Afghan Forts and villages, and I daresay we shall get the credit of it." (*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 329.)

desecrated and their headstones smashed in pieces by these self-constituted British allies ; and though Sir Donald Steward was very angry and denounced the Hazaras in his letters as " Barbarian cut-throats," whose co-operation, if offered, he should decline,<sup>1</sup> he made no attempt to punish the offenders, as Wellington or Nott would have done in his place ; an impolitic omission, for an act of justice, executed upon his " friends " in the interest of his enemies, would have done much to disarm the hostility which, passive so far, was about to assume an active form.<sup>2</sup>

That day a body of the enemy some 9,000 strong, was discovered by the British scouts to be moving parallel to the line of march of the now united Division, at a distance of from eight to ten miles, and at night they occupied a group of villages lying about four miles south-east of the British camp ; but, when the morning dawned, not a man was to be seen.

Considerable modifications in the distribution of the troops among the different commanders had been made since Barter's Brigade joined the rest of the Division, and it was in the following order that Stewart's force resumed its march at daybreak on the 19th of April :—

LEADING TROOPS  
UNDER COMMAND OF BRIGADIER-GENERAL C. H. PALLISER.

BRIGADE STAFF.

Major G. C. Bird, Brigade-Major.

Lieutenant W. E. G. Forbes, Orderly Officer.

Lieutenant A. C. Batten, Orderly Officer.

Lieutenant C. Hoskyns, Orderly Officer.

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> The author of an article on Sir Donald Stewart's march, published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for May, 1881, wrote that " The presence of these men was to all concerned not only an immense and unmitigated nuisance, but a positive obstruction to our movements ; while their conduct in looting and burning Afghan villages, and in slaying every Afghan, man, woman, and child, whom they met with on the road—as long as our presence secured them against retaliation—brought upon us the odium and responsibility of acts which we exerted ourselves to the utmost to prevent." (P. 55.)

## STEWART'S MARCH TO KABUL

325

A-B Royal Horse Artillery, six 9-pr. guns, Major H. de G. Warter.  
19th Bengal Lancers, 300 Sabres, Colonel P. S. Yorke.  
19th Punjab Infantry, 470 Rifles, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Copeland.  
No. 4 Company Sappers and Miners, Lieutenant P. Haslett.  
No. 10 Company Sappers and Miners, Captain L. F. Brown.

### GENERAL COMMANDING.

Lieutenant-General Sir Donald Stewart.  
Captain N. R. Stewart, Aide-de-Camp.

### DIVISIONAL STAFF.

Lieutenant-Colonel E. F. Chapman, Chief of the Staff.  
Major A. Handcock, Assistant Adjutant-General.  
Captain A. Gaselee, Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Captain L. T. Bishop, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Colonel A. C. Johnson, Commanding Royal Artillery.  
Captain E. M. Larminie, Commanding Royal Engineer.  
Deputy Surgeon-General A. Smith, Principal Medical Officer.  
Major C. Cowie, Commissary of Ordnance.  
Captain W. V. Ellis, Provost Marshal.  
Captain W. A. Lawrence, General Transport Officer.  
Lieutenant J. E. Dickie, Superintendent Army Signalling.  
Lieutenant B. L. P. Reilly, Acting Principal Commissariat Officer.<sup>1</sup>  
Captain R. F. C. A. Tytler, Deputy Judge Advocate.  
Major C. B. Euan Smith, Chief Political Officer.  
Major R. C. Clifford, Assistant Political Officer.  
Rev. T. J. L. Warneford, Chaplain.  
Rev. Father J. Allen, Chaplain.

### THE GENERAL'S ESCORT COMMANDED BY LIEUTENANT A. DAVIDSON.

A troop 19th Bengal Lancers, 50 Sabres.  
A Company 2-60th Rifles, 63 Rifles.  
A Company 25th Punjab Infantry, 85 Rifles.

### SECOND BRIGADE

COMMANDED BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL R. J. HUGHES.

### BRIGADE STAFF.

Major M. H. Nicholson, Brigade-Major.  
Captain E. B. Bishop, Orderly Officer.  
Lieutenant F. Stevenson, Orderly Officer.

<sup>1</sup> Vice Captain C. F. Hughes incapacitated by an accident.

## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

G-4 Royal Artillery, six 9-pr. guns, Major Sir J. W. Campbell, Bart.  
 6-11 Royal Artillery, four Heavy guns, Major J. A. Tillard.  
 2nd Punjab Cavalry, 349 Sabres, Colonel T. G. Kennedy.  
 59th Foot, 436 Rifles, Colonel R. Lacy.  
 3rd Gurkhas, 289 Rifles, Colonel H. H. Lyster, V.C.  
 2nd Sikhs, 367 Rifles, Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Boswell.

Field Hospital.

Ordnance and Engineer Field Parks.

Treasure.

Commissariat Train.

Baggage Train.

## FIRST BRIGADE

COMMANDED BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL R. BARTER.

## BRIGADE STAFF.

Captain R. Chalmer, Brigade-Major.

Lieutenant R. E. W. Copeland-Crawford, Orderly Officer.

Lieutenant C. Hope, Orderly Officer.

Lieutenant R. E. Golightly, Orderly Officer.

11-11 Royal Artillery, six 7-pr. Mountain guns, Major N. H. Harris.

1st Punjab Cavalry, 316 Sabres, Lieutenant-Colonel C. S. Maclean.

2-60th Rifles, 443 Rifles, Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Collins.

15th Sikhs, 570 Rifles, Lieutenant-Colonel G. R. Hennessy.

25th Punjab Infantry, 380 Rifles, Colonel J. W. Hoggan.

At first the advance lay over a fairly open, level tract of country ; but, about six miles from camp, it approached the base of a big spur, which, jutting out from the western range of mountains and sweeping round to eastward, crossed the Ghazni road about three miles further on. Close to the threshold of this hilly zone, Stewart and his escort, Hughes and his Brigade, had halted for breakfast when a Staff-officer—Major Bird—galloped in with the news that the Afghans were in great strength on the British left and front. For a moment the General was inclined to believe that Hazaras had been mistaken for Afghans,<sup>1</sup> but a glance through his field-glasses undeceived him ;

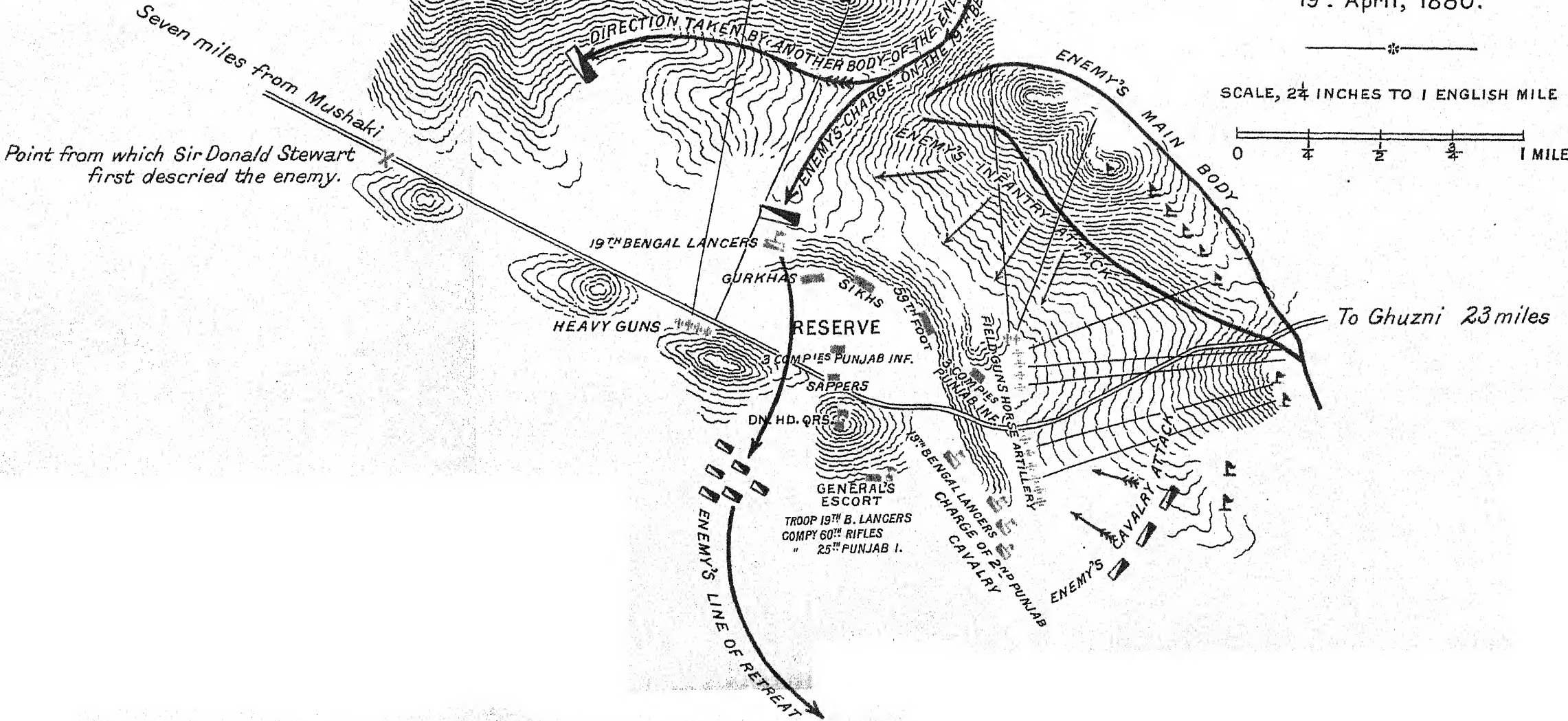
<sup>1</sup> " Our absolute ignorance of the country was our greatest difficulty ; the systematic desertion carried out by the enemy having made it impossible to gain the smallest information." (Chapman in *Blackwood's Magazine* for February, 1902, p. 261.)



# ACTION OF AHMED KHEL

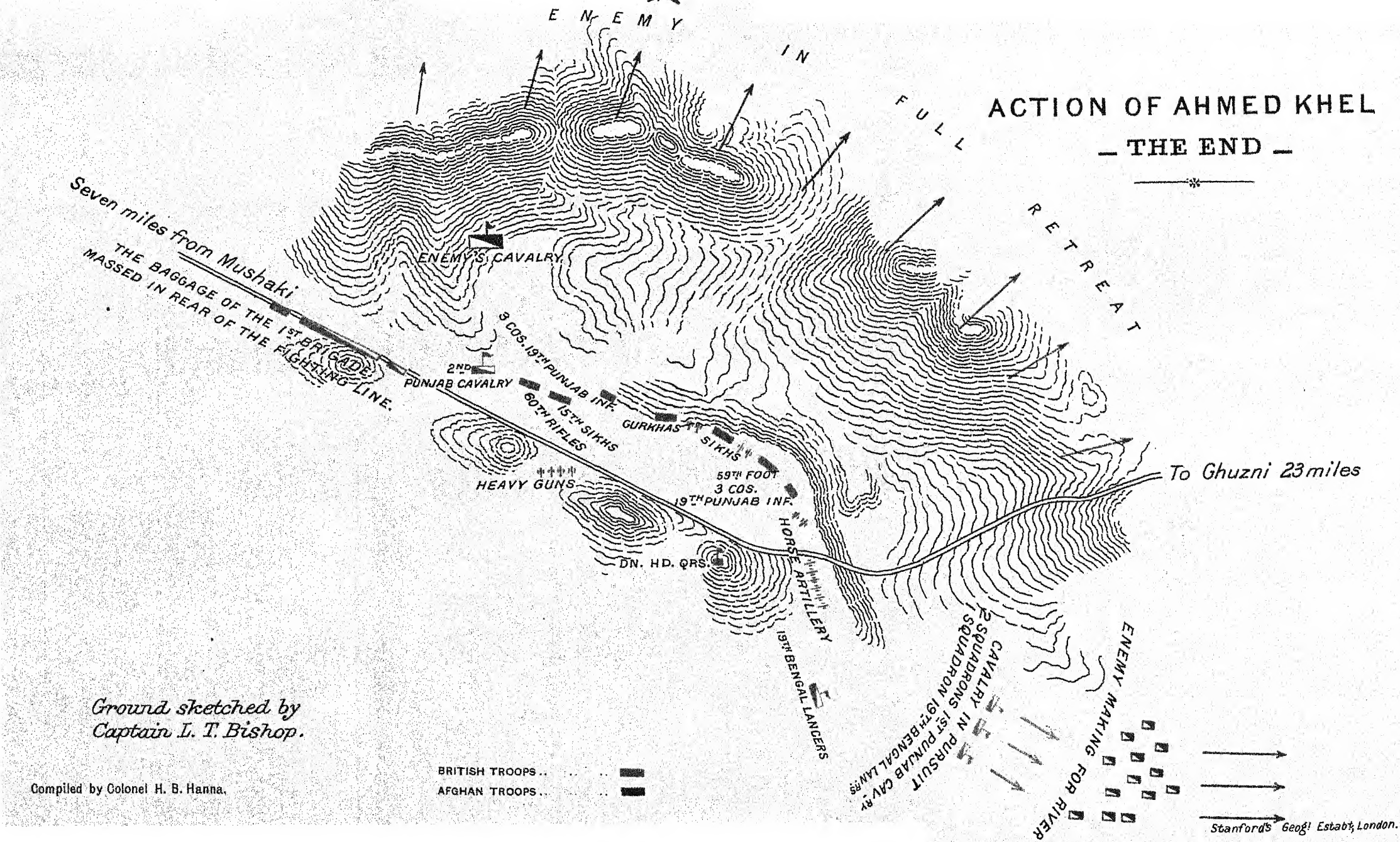
## — THE BEGINNING —

19<sup>th</sup> April, 1880.



# ACTION OF AHMED KHEL

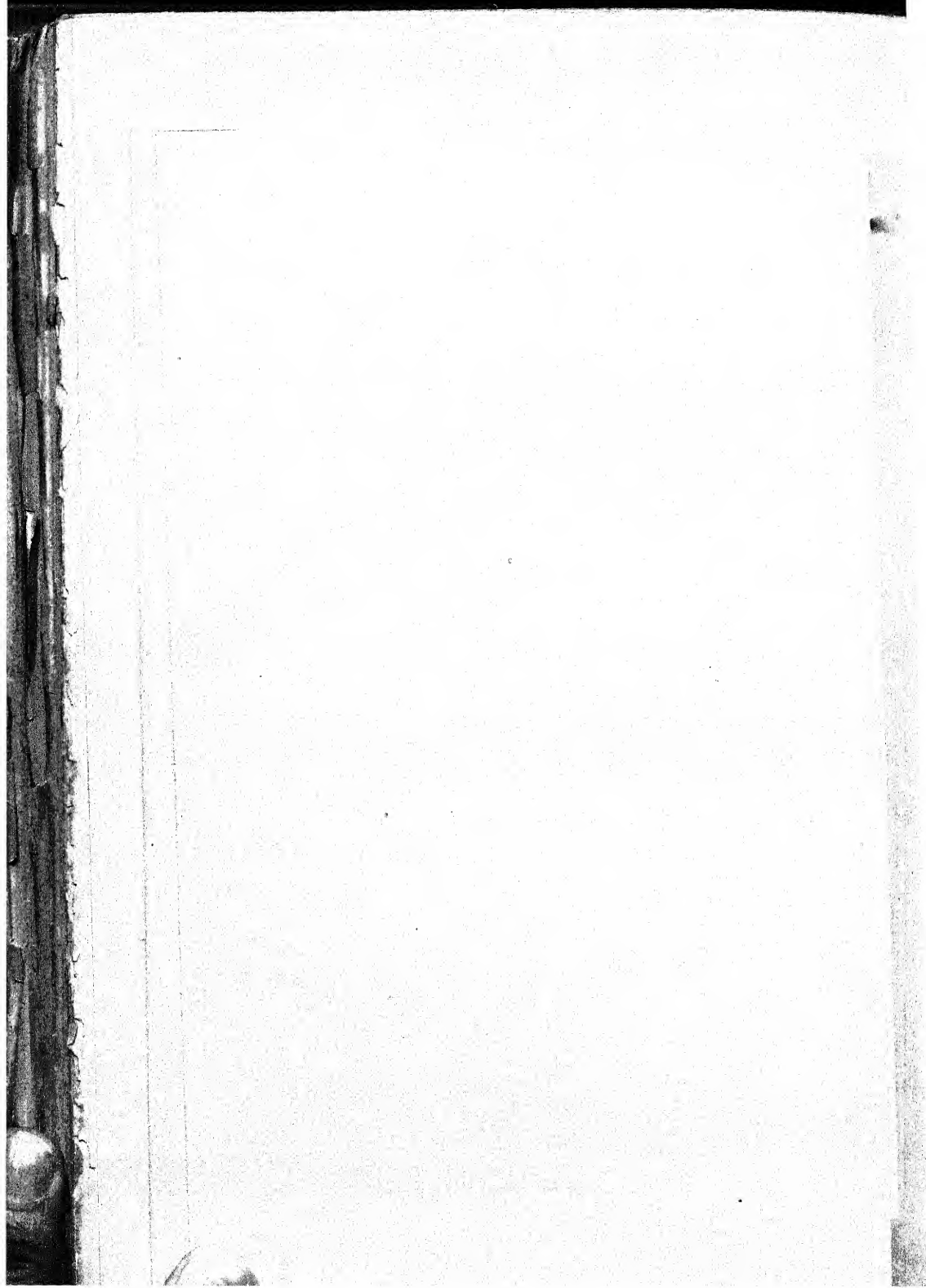
## — THE END —



Ground sketched by  
Captain L. T. Bishop.

Compiled by Colonel H. B. Hanna.





those crowds of horsemen and footmen holding the hills and barring his advance, were not friends but foes—and foes in a very formidable position—and no time must be lost in preparing to meet them. Hughes's Brigade at once formed up on the left of A-B Royal Horse Artillery, the leading battery of the three which were halting on the road in column of route; and a troop of the 19th Bengal Lancers, strengthened later by a squadron of the regiment, was detached to scout along the hills lying to the left of the road; the remainder of the cavalry under Palliser took up a position on the right of the artillery, on ground which sloped gradually down to the river Ghazni three miles away; whilst the 19th Punjab Infantry, the two companies of Sappers and Miners, and the General's escort were held in reserve. At 7.45, orders were sent to Barter to despatch with all speed two squadrons of the 1st Punjab Cavalry to join Palliser's Brigade and to follow himself with half of his infantry. As Barter was six miles away, in rear of the long, straggling baggage train, only his cavalry could by any possibility reach the main body under two hours;<sup>1</sup> yet, at 8 o'clock, Sir Donald Stewart resumed the advance. Fourteen hundred yards from the enemy's main position, he directed Hughes to form for attack,<sup>2</sup> and the troops immediately began to deploy to the west of the Ghazni road, with the Horse and Field Batteries, respectively, on either side of it, and the Heavy Battery a mile in rear, occupying a low hill lying to the right of the road, at the foot of which the equipment of the Sapper Companies and the entrenching tools of the infantry were placed for shelter. The artillery came quickly into action, but the infantry were

<sup>1</sup> "On the 18th of April a considerable body threatened us, and the order of march for the following day was in consequence altered, the very considerable baggage column which accompanied us being placed between the leading Brigade and a complete Brigade which constituted the rear-guard." (Ibid. p. 261.)

<sup>2</sup> "When we were within about 1,400 yards of the hill, I rode forward to General Hughes, who commanded the infantry, requesting him to form for attack, the intention being that we should be the assailants." (Ibid.)

still in the act of deploying when, in an incredibly short space of time, along a front of nearly two miles, an enormous mass of men formed up on the hills facing the British troops,<sup>1</sup> and a few moments later the front and both flanks of Stewart's small Force were being furiously assailed. On the left, crowds of horsemen and footmen, pouring down two ravines, struck the Bengal Lancers, who had been observing the hills, and drove them right down first upon the 3rd Gurkhas, who, caught in the act of deploying, swiftly formed squares, then upon the 19th Punjab Infantry. For a moment, the suddenness and force of the onslaught threw even this fine regiment into confusion; but the men, quickly recovering themselves, formed squares and joined their Gurkha comrades in pouring a succession of deadly volleys into the rear of the struggling mass of friends and foes, who, interspersed with ammunition mules, swept over the medical officers at their dressing stations,<sup>2</sup> and nearly up to the low hill where, in view of the fighting line and close to the reserve, Sir D. Stewart and his staff had taken up a position from which all parts of the field of battle were visible. Here, rallied by the General himself, the Lancers turned upon their pursuers, who, shattered by the infantry's destructive fire, galloped off to the right rear, leaving some of their dead within a few yards of the spot where Sir Donald had been standing.

Simultaneously with the attack on the British left, three thousand white-robed footmen burst in successive waves from the enemy's central mass, and stretching out to right and left as they ran, threatened to envelope the entire British position, whilst two thousand horsemen, emerging at a gallop from behind a hill on the enemy's true left, dashed across the plain lying between the troops and the river, with the intention of getting into Hughes's rear.<sup>3</sup>

Although, against breech-loading rifles and artillery firing case shot at short ranges, the weapons of the devoted Afghan swordsmen were

<sup>1</sup> Stewart's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Surgeon-General A. Smith's Report.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

miserable in the extreme, their courage and numbers made them formidable foes.<sup>1</sup> Their fierce onrush pressed back the 59th Foot;<sup>2</sup> the guns, having exhausted their ammunition, saw themselves obliged to withdraw to positions two hundred yards in rear,<sup>3</sup> and with the front shaken and both flanks turned, the situation was for a time highly critical—all the more critical because the troops were for the most part fighting against an invisible foe, so vast and dense were the clouds of dust, which, flying before a fierce wind, enveloped the entire field of battle. Lyster's Gurkhas and the 3rd Sikhs, under Colonel Boswell, continued to hold the key of the position with resolute firmness, and a brilliant charge of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, led by Colonel Kennedy, into the mass of horsemen sweeping across the plain towards the exposed flank of the batteries, relieved the pressure

<sup>1</sup> "Most of them were big men, with long white robes flowing in the wind, right arms with swords or other weapons extended, and trying to guard their bodies (against Martini-Henry bullets!) with shields. Anyone with the semblance of a heart under his khaki jacket could not help feeling something like pity to see them thus advancing with their miserable weapons in the face of our guns and rifles, but their courage and numbers made them formidable." (Captain Elias in *Journal of Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. XXIV. No. CVII. pp. 669, 670.)

"The scene was one which baffles description. Such an enormous body of Ghazi swordsmen had not been brought together since the battle of Meeanee. Their bravery was magnificent, and the fury of their onset tried the nerves of our troops for a few minutes, for nothing stopped them short of death." (Chapman, p. 262.)

<sup>2</sup> "They had hardly finished deploying, many of them had omitted to fix bayonets, and there was for a few seconds a tendency among some of them to waver and form into small groups. This, however, passed away as instantaneously as it arose, and during the rest of the action the men's steadiness left nothing to be desired." ("Sir Donald Stewart's March from Kandahar to Kabul," *Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1881, p. 58.)

<sup>3</sup> "The disregard for life which the Ghazis exhibited may be judged of by the fact that they charged up to within thirty yards of Major de Grey Warter's guns, then firing case and reversed shrapnell, and thus compelled him to retire his guns 100 or 150 yards." (Ibid.)

Stewart in his Despatch says 200 yards.—H. B. H.

on the British right. Nevertheless, the danger was not averted till Stewart had thrown all his reserves, including his own escort, into the fighting line.<sup>1</sup> Half a battalion of the 19th Punjab Infantry and the Sappers and Miners were sent to deploy on the Gurkhas' left; the other half-battalion of the 19th, the company of the 60th Rifles, and that of the 25th Punjab Infantry, were pushed into the open space between the guns and the 59th Foot, which had quickly recovered from its temporary discomfiture; whilst the centre of the position, where the fighting was at its fiercest, was strengthened by the addition of four guns of the Field Battery.<sup>2</sup> The issue still hung in the balance when the two squadrons of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, under Colonel C. S. Maclean, that had been called up from Barter's Brigade arrived on the field, and joining the squadron of the 19th Bengal Lancers on escort duty with the guns, promptly drove the enemy across the river. This cleared Stewart's right and turned the tide of battle in his favour; and when the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, assisted by a few well-directed shells from the Heavy guns, had put to flight some horsemen who were trying to get round the British left to fall upon the baggage, the tribesmen accepted their defeat, and dispersed with such rapidity that fighting was over before Barter's infantry reached the scene of action. Their arrival enabled the whole force to make a forward movement,<sup>3</sup> and by 11 a.m., an hour after the cease-fire had been

<sup>1</sup> Stewart's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> "Our numbers actually fighting were approximately 1,800 infantry, 700 cavalry (not including the 1st Punjab Cavalry, which joined afterwards), 12 Horse Artillery and Field guns, and the Heavy Battery consisting of two 40-pounders and two 6-3 inch howitzers." (Captain R. Elias in *Journal of R.U.S. Institution*, Vol. XXIV. p. 671.)

<sup>3</sup> "The fighting had lasted a little more than an hour; most of the fugitives moved off in the direction of the river and the Shilghur Hills beyond, *i.e.* eastward; but a large body collected on a hill more to the north, nearly a mile from us. As it was not quite certain whether they might not gather again, a general advance was made to some rising ground about 500 yards in front, but they had had enough, and after a few well-directed shells, those on the hills also dispersed." (*Ibid.*)



sounded, not a vestige of the great gathering, variously estimated at from 12,000 to 15,000 men, was to be discovered.

Spread abroad over low ground, the Ghilzais were for a time open to a destructive pursuit; but Stewart, fearing lest in the absence of his cavalry, they might cut in on his right and fall upon "the large parks and baggage train formed in rear," forbore to follow them up.<sup>1</sup> What he could not risk, the Hazaras, who had nothing to lose, were eager to undertake. Some two thousand of these men, who had hovered round the combatants, watching the changing fortunes of the fight, fell upon the scattering Afghans and killed many of the fugitives.

Sir Donald Stewart halted for two hours on the field of battle to bury the Europeans killed in the action, to collect the bodies of the Native dead to be carried on to the next camping ground,<sup>2</sup> and to give time to the medical officers to attend to the wounded; then, "with its baggage in close formation," the whole Division moved forward over very rough ground to Nani, seventeen miles from the spot where it had spent the previous night.<sup>3</sup> After crossing the low pass held by the Ghilzais the country becomes more open, there are fewer water-courses, and the road is better, but still sandy and heavy.<sup>4</sup>

In his Despatch Stewart pronounced the conduct of his troops in this short, but severe engagement, as above all praise, if the character of the attack, led by swarms of men ready to buy victory at the price of their own lives, were taken into account; and he brought three officers—Captain A. Gaselee, Assistant Quartermaster-General, Lieutenant S. Watson, and sub-Lieutenant H. M. Twyman, both of

<sup>1</sup> Stewart's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> "The Native soldiery carried their dead into camp, and either burnt or buried them the same evening." (*Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1881, p. 59.)

<sup>3</sup> Stewart in his Despatch states that the distance between Mushaki and Nani was 17 miles, which is confirmed by Macgregor; whereas Gaselee in his Itinerary makes it 14½, and Chapman 19 miles.—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> Gaselee.

the 59th Foot—specially to the Commander-in-Chief's notice. The former he himself had seen "encouraging the retiring line at the most critical period of the action," and "the gallant example he set the men by advancing towards the enemy and calmly shooting down some of the most forward of them, had the very best effect on the soldiers;" whilst Watson had been wounded in rallying his regiment, and Twyman had done his best to save the life of one of his men.<sup>1</sup>

The engagement of Ahmed Khel, critical for the British, had been disastrous for the Afghans. Twelve hundred bodies were counted on the field; and considering the heavy fire at close quarters to which they were subjected, it is probable that the number of the wounded fell little short of three thousand. That the British casualties, a full list of which is given in the following table, were comparatively few, was owing mainly to the assailants' miserable weapons; had the Ghazis' arms been equal to their courage, the result would have been a very different one.

#### TABLE OF KILLED AND WOUNDED

##### IN THE ENGAGEMENT OF AHMED KHEL.

###### *Officers Wounded.*

Captain R. Corbett . . .	A-B Royal Horse Artillery.
Captain J. H. Broome . . .	2nd Punjab Cavalry.
Lieutenant C. J. L. Stuart . . .	" " "
Colonel P. S. Yorke . . .	19th Bengal Lancers.
Lieutenant E. A. Young <sup>2</sup> . . .	" " "
Lieutenant H. S. Massy . . .	" " "
Lieutenant S. D. Gordon . . .	" " "
Major and Lieutenant-Colonel J. Lawson,	59th Foot.
Lieutenant and Adjutant S. Watson,	" "

<sup>1</sup> "A like bold attempt was made by Major Frampton, 59th Regiment, in the case of a wounded soldier, but it was impossible to rescue anyone who was down; the Ghazis immediately swarmed round him, like hounds breaking into a fox." (Captain R. Elias, *Journal of R.U.S. Institution*, Vol. XXIV. p. 672.)

<sup>2</sup> This officer received eight sword-cuts all of a serious nature, and one bullet wound. A sanguine temperament, a good constitution, and the skilful and unremitting attention of Surgeon W. R. Murphy saved his life.—H. B. H.

Ressaldar Jowahir Sing . . .	19th Bengal Lancers.
Ressaldar Mahomed Shahriar . . .	" " "
Jemadar Golab Sing . . .	" " "

## *Non-Commissioned Officers, Men, and Followers Killed.*

One man . . . . .	59th Foot.
Colour-Sergeant J. H. Chessum . . .	2-60th Rifles.
Two men . . . . .	" "
One non-commissioned officer . . .	2nd Punjab Cavalry.
Two men . . . . .	" " "
Two non-commissioned officers . . .	19th Bengal Lancers.
Three men . . . . .	" " "
One man . . . . .	2nd Sikhs.
One man . . . . .	19th Punjab Infantry.
Two men . . . . .	25th Punjab Infantry.
One camp-follower . . . . .	A-B Royal Horse Artillery.

## *Non-Commissioned Officers, Men, and Followers wounded.*

One man . . . . .	A-B Royal Horse Artillery.
One man . . . . .	G-4 Royal Artillery.
Sergeant F. Thompson . . . . .	59th Foot.
Nine men . . . . .	" "
Two men . . . . .	2-60th Rifles.
Sergeant John Jones . . . . .	No. 4 Company Sappers and Miners.
Three non-commissioned officers . . .	1st Punjab Cavalry.
Sixteen men . . . . .	" " "
Seven non-commissioned officers . . .	2nd Punjab Cavalry.
Thirteen men . . . . .	" " "
Eleven non-commissioned officers . . .	19th Bengal Lancers.
Thirty men . . . . .	" " "
One non-commissioned officer . . .	2nd Sikhs.
Eight men . . . . .	" "
One follower . . . . .	" "
Four followers . . . . .	3rd Gurkhas.
One non-commissioned officer . . .	19th Punjab Infantry.
Two men . . . . .	" " "

## CASUALTIES AMONG HORSES.

	<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>	<i>Missing.</i>
1st Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	—	32	5
2nd Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	5	21	2
19th Bengal Lancers . . . . .	3	15	6
	—	—	—
Total . . . . .	8	68	13

## ABSTRACT.

Officers wounded . . . . .	12
Non-commissioned officers, men, and followers killed and wounded	129
	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	141

Casualties among horses, 89.

On the 20th of April, the Division marched seven miles over a good, level road and camped at Ispandi, a village lying midway between Nani and Ghazni. No enemy was sighted and the wounded bore the journey well. A reconnaissance made in the afternoon by Major Lance and Captain Gaselee showed that there were no armed men in Ghazni, the ruined walls of which city were incapable of offering a successful resistance.<sup>1</sup> Resistance must, however, at one time have been intended, for next day the troops marched for some distance between high garden walls that had evidently been put quite recently into a state of defence. That day, for the first time since leaving Khelat-i-Ghilzai, a number of villages were found to be inhabited, and as Stewart's long column passed round the city to encamp on the ground where Sir John Keane's force had bivouacked on the 21st of July, 1839, the walls were seen to be crowded with spectators of both sexes.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding these proofs of a more peaceful spirit prevailing among the people of the district, opposition to the British advance was not yet at an end. In the course of the 22nd of April, the day on which Lieutenant Dickie opened heliographic communication with Ross's force, Stewart learned that thirty thousand tribesmen, led by Mushk-i-Alam and Mahomed Jan, had assembled at no great distance

<sup>1</sup> "Notwithstanding the state of the fortifications, however, Ghazni would be still a difficult place to attack were it held by a determined enemy. The town is surrounded on every side by a mass of gardens within high mud walls and covering a considerable extent of country. Were these to be well defended, they could not be taken without a severe loss of life on the attacking side." (*Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1881, p. 60.)

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Surgeon-General A. Smith's Report.

from Ghazni; and a reconnaissance discovered an advanced guard of this great force, some seven thousand strong, posted in the villages of Ursu and Shalez, only six or seven miles from the British camp. Measures for their dislodgment were concerted the same evening, and, at 3.30 next morning, General Palliser moved out to attack them with the following troops:—

A-B Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	6 Guns,
11-11 Royal Artillery (Mountain) . . . . .	6 „
1st Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	322 Sabres,
2nd Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	325 „
2-60th Rifles . . . . .	525 Rifles,
15th Sikhs . . . . .	578 „
25th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	458 „
2nd Sikhs . . . . .	424 „

and a little later the remainder of the Division was drawn up about a mile outside camp, ready to render assistance if called upon to do so.

Palliser's troops pushed on as quickly as the uneven nature of the ground would permit until, from the crest of a low range of hills, they looked down upon the two villages, the occupants of which, evidently unaware of their approach, were thrown into a state of great excitement by their sudden appearance—excitement, not fear, for with both villages protected by thick mud walls and the ground on every side either cultivated or broken and marshy, they had good reason to feel confidence in the strength of their position. Having satisfied himself that with the small force at his disposal he could not capture either Ursu or Shalez without a greater loss of life than he felt justified in incurring,<sup>1</sup> Palliser ordered the guns to shell the villages whilst, with the cavalry and infantry, he made a demonstration against them, in the hope of drawing the enemy into the open; but the Afghans could neither be tempted to leave nor be frightened out of their defences,

<sup>1</sup> “Such a proceeding, although pretty certain of success, must inevitably have cost many lives, a sacrifice which the occasion did not demand, and which our small force could ill afford.” (Captain R. Elias, *Journal of the R.U.S. Institution*, Vol. XXIV. p. 673.)



and he had to heliograph for reinforcements. Stewart immediately despatched two hundred and fifty-three men of the 59th, and a hundred and ninety-one of the 3rd Gurkhas, to his lieutenant's assistance ; but, before they could reach him, many tribesmen from neighbouring hamlets had flocked into the space between Ursu and Shalez, so that the disparity between the two forces was still maintained. Palliser's next step was to withdraw his whole column to a ridge two thousand five hundred yards in rear, in the expectation that this retrograde movement would effect what his demonstration had failed to accomplish ; but the Afghans refused to be deceived, and as they continued to lie snug and safe behind their walls, he asked for definite orders.<sup>1</sup>

On receipt of Palliser's second message, Stewart made up his mind to go himself to his assistance, with G-4 Royal Artillery, 19th Bengal Lancers, Half-Battalion 59th-Foot, and a Half-Battalion of the 19th Punjab Infantry. At daybreak he had sent Major Clifford, his Political Officer, escorted by a wing of the 19th Bengal Infantry, to close the gates of the city and keep its inhabitants under observation ; now, he left Major Tillard, with 6-11 Royal Artillery (Heavy guns), half a Battalion 3rd Gurkhas, and two Companies of Sappers and Miners, to guard the camp against a possible attack, either from within or without the city. Tillard set his men to work to dig shelter trenches and construct breastworks of camel-saddles ; but no precautions that he could take would have sufficed to assure the safety of the camp-followers, supplies, and transport animals left to the protection of so inadequate a force, if it had turned out that the enemy had lured away the greater part of Stewart's Division with the intention of falling upon the baggage train and commissariat stores.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1881, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> "We had left our camp seven miles behind, not very strongly protected. What if the whole affair had been a ruse to inveigle us out, while a large force came down from the hills in our absence and burned all the tents and stores, etc. ?, but the Afghans are not an enterprising enemy, and there was probably nothing to fear." (Captain R. Elias in *Journal of R.U.S. Institution*, Vol. XXIV. p. 674.)

Luckily for the whole Division, no such plan had occurred to them, and Stewart's task proved easier than he had anticipated. On joining Palliser and assuming command of his troops, Sir Donald quickly decided to make his attack on the village of Shalez, as, in so doing, he would not endanger his communications with Ghazni. In pursuance of this decision, he ordered Barter, with the 2-60th Rifles, the 15th Sikhs, and the 25th Punjab Infantry, supported by A-B Royal Horse Artillery, the 1st Punjab Cavalry, and the 19th Bengal Lancers, to advance by a track that skirted the base of the ridge to which Palliser had retired, turn the enemy's true left and storm the village from behind, whilst Hughes, with the 59th Foot, 2nd Sikhs, and 3rd Gurkhas, covered by the fire of 4 guns G-4 Field Battery and the Mountain guns, was to attack the place in front as soon as Barter's assault was fully developed. The wing of the 19th Punjab Infantry the General held in reserve, and he despatched the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, with the remaining two guns of G-4, to the left to watch the village of Ursu.

The movement, begun at 11.40 a.m., was crowned with rapid success. At sight of the long British line advancing on their front and flank, the Afghans, fearing to be caught in a trap, beat a hasty retreat from both villages, which within an hour were in the hands of the troops. The Cavalry and Horse Artillery pursued the fugitives for some distance ; but no looting was allowed, and when the women rushed out of the villages, trembling for the safety of their houses, Sir Donald bade them go back, assuring them that they would not be molested ; he had not come out to fight against women and children.<sup>1</sup>

The British casualties were very small—one man of the 2-60th Rifles and one of the 1st Punjab Cavalry killed, and one non-commissioned officer and one man of the latter regiment and one of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry wounded ; whilst the Afghans were reported to have lost 150 killed and 250 wounded.<sup>2</sup> The affair in itself was of

<sup>1</sup> Rev. T. J. L. Warneford. (*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 338.)

<sup>2</sup> Report of Deputy Surgeon-General A. Smith.

no great importance, but its results were far-reaching, for the discomfiture of the Afghan advanced guard was followed by the immediate dispersal of the large force—from 20,000 to 30,000—that had assembled near Mushk-i-Alam's fort, with the intention of delivering a second desperate attack on the small British column.<sup>1</sup>

During his few days' halt outside the walls of Ghazni, the political situation chiefly occupied Sir Donald Stewart's attention. He felt that it would be impolitic to move on, a mere bird of passage, leaving chaos behind him; yet he was convinced that any Governor of his appointing would have small chance of retaining his position for a day after his departure, and he was determined that, so far as he was concerned, no Afghan should be able to say that British friendship had done him an injury with his own people.<sup>2</sup> Looking round for some man to take the government of the province fully off his hands, he ascertained that Sirdar Mahomed Alam was willing to undertake the task, provided that he (Sir Donald) would guarantee his position and permit the heir-apparent, Musa Jan, to reside in Ghazni under his charge—conditions which Stewart felt justified in accepting. The appointment gave great satisfaction to the people of Ghazni,<sup>3</sup> and Stewart, anxious to leave not only order but peace behind him, advised the Hazaras, who had come to him in alarm, declaring "that they could not live alongside the Afghans again," to see the new Governor, who had expressed himself ready to meet them half-way. "If a truce can be secured for a time," so wrote this true statesman to his wife, "both sides will see that it will be in their own interests to let by-gones be by-gones."<sup>4</sup>

On the 25th of April, Stewart's Division resumed its march, and

<sup>1</sup> *Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1881, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, pp. 337, 338.

<sup>3</sup> This selection "quieted the people, for they saw that the victorious English General was willing to make over a city and district which were absolutely at his mercy, to be administered by one of their own Sirdars." (Article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1881.)

<sup>4</sup> *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 337.

after crossing the Shah-i-Dahan Pass, the summit of which is 9,100 feet above sea-level, and a wide plateau, watered by numerous Karezes, yet destitute of cultivation—a sign of the unsettled state of the country—descended into the Wardak Valley and halted at Shashgao, thirteen and a half miles north of Ghazni. Major A. A. A. Kinlock, escorted by a party of the 3rd Bengal Cavalry and accompanied by Major-General J. Hills, arrived in camp the same evening, sent by Ross to open communication with Sir Donald Stewart.

Ross had arrived at Sheikabad, on the 23rd, to find the hills in the vicinity of that village strongly held by the enemy, and though they had retired from them before numerous and active reconnoitring parties, they reoccupied them next morning. The same day it was reported that a large body of tribesmen were approaching from the North, and a thousand men, led by Abdul Ghafur of Lagar, actually surrounded a hundred Sappers and two companies of Gurkhas, engaged in road-making, and had to be driven off by cavalry.<sup>1</sup> On the 25th a large number of Ghilzais were discovered within two miles of the British camp, and Ross sent out Lieutenant-Colonel F. F. Rowcroft with—

2 Screw Guns No. 4 Mountain Battery	. Lieutenant H. M. Sandback,
1 Troop 3rd Bengal Cavalry . . .	. Major G. W. Willock,
2 Companies 2-9th Foot . . .	. Captain C. M. Stockley,
Wing 4th Gurkhas . . . . .	. Major J. Hay,

supported by Half a Troop 3rd Bengal Cavalry, commanded by a Native Officer, and 3 Companies 24th Punjab Infantry, commanded by Captain P. H. Wallerstein, all under Major B. M. Combe, to turn them out of their position, which was evidently a strong one.

Covered by the well-directed fire of the guns, the infantry quickly dislodged the Ghilzais from their first line of defence. At the second, they made a more determined stand; but Combe turned their flank whilst Rowcroft forced them out of their entrenchments with the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 196.

bayonet. Meanwhile, another body of the enemy had appeared on Rowcroft's left, to disperse which Charles Gough went out with four companies of the 4th Gurkhas and two screw guns, the fire of which soon compelled the Ghilzais to beat a retreat. Hotly pressed by Rowcroft's troops, they lost a standard and a considerable number of men—forty dead bodies were counted on the field—yet, notwithstanding their defeat, they reappeared the next day on the hills near camp, and Gough had again to go out against them with the screw guns, the 9th Foot, and the 23rd Pioneers. Under the fire of the guns, which were sighted for two thousand yards, two companies of each regiment, led by Colonel Daunt, scaled the hill-side, and when they reached the summit—two thousand three hundred feet above camp, nine thousand two hundred above sea-level—the enemy bolted, leaving a few dead behind them ; and after that, Ross's column which, from first to last, had only lost one man 4th Gurkhas killed, and one man 2-9th Foot and three Gurkhas wounded, was left in peace.

Whilst Gough was breaking down the Ghilzais' resistance, Stewart was marching in lovely weather from Shashgao to Haft Asia. On the 27th, he moved on to Hyder Khel by a narrow, rough road running at the foot of the hills, on the edge of a populous and well-cultivated country, and on the 28th, he joined hands with Ross, and took leave "with sorrow" of the Ghazni Field Force, the temporary command of which was taken over by General Hughes. Next day, he joined Ross's column on its way back to Sir-i-Tup ; at Argandeh he and Roberts met, and, on the 2nd of May, the two Generals entered Kabul together.

The troops over which Sir D. Stewart now assumed command, known thenceforward as the Northern Afghanistan Field Force, numbered roughly speaking thirty-six thousand, organized into four Divisions, and distributed along two hundred miles of more or less practicable road. The First and Second Divisions, commanded respectively by Sir F. Roberts and Major-General Ross, administrative control of



both being still vested in the former officer, consisted of all the corps that Sir Donald had found in Kabul on his arrival in that city ; the Ghazni Field Force, which under Major-General J. Hills was to occupy the Logar Valley as soon as the paths leading into it had been made practicable for artillery, constituted the Third ; and to the Fourth, commanded by Major-General Bright, belonged all the troops on the Khyber line that had been withdrawn in February from Roberts's control. It was intended that Major-General J. Watson's column in the Kuram should also come under Stewart's orders, as soon as the road over the Shutargardan had been reopened, but communication with India *viâ* the Kuram Valley was never re-established, and Watson remained in independent command to the end of the war.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. From a strategical point of view the march from Kandahar to Kabul must be condemned. Sir Donald Stewart's Force was a Flying Column without base and without support, and though accompanied by a large transport train, it was virtually dependent for its food and forage, at the most unfavourable season of the year, on a country always poor and which had been already twice invaded—the second invasion extending as far as Shahjui. To depend on local supplies where supplies, at the best of times, are scarce and only to be obtained by a well-organized foraging system, is to incur starvation in case of defeat, and defeat was narrowly escaped at Ahmed Khel. Had there been no other way of retirement open to the Kandahar garrison, necessity would have excused the risk ; but there was nothing to prevent their returning to India by the Bolan, and the two objects which Lord Lytton had at heart, viz. the placing of affairs in Northern Afghanistan in Sir Donald Stewart's hands, and the giving the Afghans a crowning proof of the British Empire's irresistible power by breaking up the opposition of which Ghazni had been the centre, before relieving them of the presence of a British

army of occupation, could have been attained more quickly and economically by that route. Thanks to the completion of the Sukkur-Sibi railway, Stewart could have been in Peshawar within ten days of leaving Kandahar. Another ten days would have seen him established in Kabul, after enjoying the advantage of inspecting the Khyber Force on his way up; any reinforcements deemed essential to the success of the final military operations could have been drawn from India, their place being taken by the Bengal Division, as one regiment after another followed in the footsteps of its commander; and no one can question that the lesson which Lord Lytton was so anxious to impress upon the Afghans, could have been taught with greater expedition and greater thoroughness, at less risk and less cost, by troops acting from a strong base at Sherpur, only ninety miles from Ghazni, than by a force without a base of any kind, marching on that city from Kandahar, three hundred and sixteen miles away. The still simpler and more economical plan of railing the Bombay Division to Peshawar, and leaving the Bengal Division at Kandahar, could not be adopted on account of the great strain it would have put on the loyalty of Native troops that had already been eighteen months absent from their homes.

Responsibility for this faulty movement must be divided between the military and political authorities in India, and Sir Donald Stewart; for if *they* planned and ordered it, *he* accepted their orders without remonstrance, either failing to see that the plan was vicious, in which case his military judgment was at fault, or else shrinking from the performance of a duty which Napoleon declared to be obligatory upon every Commander when directed to undertake operations which he believed to be dangerous and unwise:—"It is his" (the General's) "duty to represent his reasons and to insist upon a change of plan; in short, to give in his resignation rather than allow himself to become the instrument of his army's ruin."

The fact that Stewart offered to undertake the march with con-

siderably less than his whole division, looks as if he undervalued the risks to be run ; but it is not safe to put this interpretation upon the proposal, for if, in one direction, those risks would have been increased, in another, they would have been lessened. The problem that presented itself to him may be thus stated :—

The larger the force I take with me, the greater will be the difficulty of feeding it ; the smaller that force, the greater the probability of its being overwhelmed by the enemy—which alternative shall I choose ?

It is evident that he preferred the latter, and the preference was to some extent justified by the fact that in order to procure food and forage for the larger force, insisted on by the Commander-in-Chief, he had to break it up and to expose one of his Brigades to the danger of attack under conditions which must prevent the other from coming to its assistance.

OBSERVATION II. If the strategy of the march to Kabul was bad, the tactics of the action at Ahmed Khel were worse. Their errors may be summarized as follows :—

- (1) Neglecting to keep the Force in close touch on the line of march.
- (2) Rushing on the enemy without waiting for the reinforcements that had been called up.
- (3) Deploying when within the enemy's striking distance.
- (4) Pushing the Horse and Field Artillery in advance of the Infantry, whilst the latter were still in the act of forming line.
- (5) Placing the 19th Bengal Lancers at the extremity of the left flank of the line of battle, on ground quite unsuitable to the movements of cavalry.

(1) Sir Donald Stewart knew that a large body of Ghilzais was in the neighbourhood, yet he suffered Barter's Brigade to be six miles in rear of Hughes's, and separated from it by a long, straggling baggage train. If, after the battle, he was able to move on over very difficult

ground with his "baggage in close formation," he could have advanced in the same formation before the battle ; and he should have ordered his leading troops to regulate their speed by the pace of the transport train, and not have allowed it to rush on in its anxiety to get as quickly as possible to the next camping ground.

(2) There was nothing in the position of affairs when the presence of the enemy was reported to Stewart, to compel him to give battle immediately ; and in deciding to take the offensive with only two-thirds of his troops, he violated the most important of all Napoleon's maxims :—"When you have resolved to fight a battle, collect your whole force. Dispense with nothing. A single battalion sometimes decides the day."

(3) Having made up his mind to fight, Stewart should have taken the steps that must precede an engagement, at a sufficient distance from the enemy's known position to allow of the necessary change of formation being carried out in an orderly manner. His withholding the order to deploy till the leading troops were within fourteen hundred yards of the hills occupied by the Ghilzais, proved that he grossly underestimated their numbers and their courage ; and he narrowly escaped paying for his miscalculation by defeat, with all the terrible consequences which defeat must have entailed upon troops dependent for existence, day by day, upon supplies which they would not have been in a position to collect—supposing them to have escaped immediate annihilation and to have saved their military stores.

(4) Artillery cannot protect itself, and therefore it should not be placed in an exposed position beyond the line of battle. If within musketry range of the enemy, it is in danger of having its horses shot down, and thus being deprived of the power to retreat ; if, retaining its mobility, it is compelled to fall back in haste, it carries confusion into the ranks of the infantry in rear. This rule is of universal application, but the need for its observance is even greater in a mountainous than in a flat country. In a very valuable account of the action of

Ahmed Khel, published in the *Journal of the United Service Institution of India* for July, 1881,<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant M. Martin, R.E., after granting that the first artillery position—1,300 yards—was possibly too near the enemy, contends that, with young infantry, it is more than ever necessary to have one or two batteries of the older and steadier artillery in the firing line. But even with the safeguards furnished by the steadiness and experience of the selected batteries, the dangers inherent in such a position outweigh the advantages attaching to the confidence which its presence may inspire in inexperienced infantry; and the younger the troops, the greater the risk of their losing their heads should that confidence prove to have been without foundation.

(5) The exposed flank of cavalry should always be protected by some obstacle, or by infantry; and when employed to support infantry or artillery, it should be placed in rear of such troops, or echeloned on their flanks.

OBSERVATION III. The enemy's plan of attack was ably conceived and so boldly delivered as to be within an ace of success; yet, the Afghan leader would have done better to resist the temptation offered him by Stewart's delay in deploying. Commanding, as he did, a brave but ill-disciplined and badly armed army, he should have awaited attack; and when the well-armed, well-disciplined British troops had been drawn on to ground, all the advantages of which would have been in his favour, he should have assailed them with his infantry, whilst falling upon the baggage train with his numerous cavalry. Such tactics could hardly have failed of success, and Sir D. Stewart had good reason to congratulate himself on the fact that he was not the only commander on that day to make mistakes.

The following passage from Lieutenant Martin's article may be quoted in support of the criticisms contained in the above observa-

<sup>1</sup> Vol. X. No. 47.



tions :—" An open plain lay to our right, between the Ghazni road and the Ghazni river, away from the enemy. We had over three hours' notice of his wishing to engage. On this plain it would have been easy to park the baggage in square under charge of, say, the 25th N.I. and one squadron 1st P.C., releasing the 15th Sikhs, 60th Rifles and 1st P.C., with the Mountain battery 11-11 R.A., for active operations. All baggage guards might have joined their corps (the cavalry especially), and though some inconvenience might have resulted, it was better than the risk of attacking with an insufficient force. More, in fact, might have been done to ensure the success of the action before the safety of the baggage. The greater contained the less."

" The action of Ahmed Khel on the Kandahar-Ghazni road may be taken as an example of the best form of tribal resistance, as a considerable amount of skill and forethought was shown. According to their own accounts, they selected an occasion when our Division was a hundred miles from any support (from Kabul and Khelat-i-Ghilzai). They assembled a force, said to outnumber ours by ten to one, largely composed of fanatics, and they chose their position. This was on our left flank and parallel to our line of advance on Ghazni. The greater number of the enemy were concealed behind the hills on our left, and only a certain number paraded in three lines on the crest and slope towards us. The bottom or foot of this slope ended in rolling ground and nullas, which afforded plenty of cover from fire and opportunity for formation, and placed our guns and rifles, as well as our cavalry, at a great disadvantage."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### A Great Financial Blunder

ON the 24th of February, 1880, the Indian budget was laid before the Viceroy's Council by the Financial Member, Sir John Strachey. According to the usual custom, his statement dealt with the past, present, and future, finally closing the accounts for the Financial year, 1878-79, revising the estimates for 1880, and presenting a forecast of expenditure for 1880-81: the cost of the whole war, therefore, from its inception in the autumn of 1878 to its expected termination in the autumn of 1880, was determined by its figures, and they proved to be much more favourable than had been anticipated. For the first time for many years, the finances of India had shown, and were still showing, such signs of elasticity that Sir John Strachey was able to announce the abandonment of a proposed tax on official and professional incomes, the fear of which had been troubling Anglo-Indian society. For the year 1878-79, there was a surplus of £2,044,000; the surplus for 1879-80 was, of course, much smaller—only £119,000; but there were good grounds for believing that 1880-81 would yield at least £417,000 in excess of expenditure after all claims connected with the war had been fully met, including £4,000,000 spent on railway construction and extension, which, though arising out of the war, could not fairly be charged against it.

The true war expenses had, so far, been surprisingly small—£676,000 in 1878-79, £3,216,000 in 1879-80—and so accurate were the accounts furnished by the Military Department to the Financial Department,

that Sir John felt sure that he was not erring on the side of under-estimating liabilities when he fixed £2,090,000 as the amount that would be required to meet all war charges in 1880-81; so that the whole cost of the operations in Afghanistan, after setting off the gain under railway and telegraph revenue, would not exceed £5,752,000.

At the close of his speech, Sir John Strachey was warmly congratulated by his colleagues; all the more warmly because of a charge of deliberately falsifying the military accounts to the extent of £6,000,000, in order to conceal the real cost of the war, to which publicity had just been given by no less a person than Mr. W. E. Gladstone, a charge based upon information which had, he declared, been given him with "such an appearance of truth that he thought it right to mention it publicly in order that, if inaccurate, it might be contradicted." Sir J. Strachey's figures gave the contradiction asked for in authoritative form, and in the debate that followed the reading of the budget, Lord Lytton protested indignantly against such anonymous accusations, and declared that "so far from seeking to conceal the true cost of the war, they (the Indian Government) had charged against it all stores and materials, as well as the cost of frontier railways, telegraphs, and postal communication."

The discrepancy between the Viceroy's statement and Sir J. Strachey's with regard to frontier railways would have been of little importance, if the latter had been able to substantiate his claim to have met expenditure of all kinds out of current revenue; but, unfortunately, the figures on which the Financial Member of Council had founded his calculations turned out to be inaccurate to an almost incredible extent, and the fair fabric of national credit and prosperity which he had built upon them, collapsed when touched by the sharp spear of truth. That destructive touch came from the Comptroller-General, who, early in March, brought the alarming drain from the Punjab treasuries in connection with the war, to the notice of the Financial Member of Council, and the inquiries that were forthwith

set on foot revealed the startling fact that, from October 1878 to the end of March 1880, the net recorded drafts upon the civil treasuries all over India, but chiefly upon those in the Punjab, exceeded the net recorded military expenditure by £4,214,000, of which sum about £2,000,000 was debitable to the first phase of the war, and the balance to the second.

£4,214,000 was a large sum to figure as an undetected deficit ; but still more searching investigations raised the acknowledged cost of the war from £9,966,000 in March to £15,770,000 in October, and to £17,498,000<sup>1</sup> in November, 1880, whilst supplementary estimates submitted by the Government of India in March 1881, finally brought up the total to £19,574,000 ; so that Sir J. Strachey's Budget was wrong not to the extent of £6,000,000, the sum at which the error in the Indian Finances was set down by Mr. Gladstone's informant, but of £13,800,000, probably the largest miscalculation ever made in the accounts of a nation.

The truth once known, Sir E. Johnson, Military Member of the Viceroy's Council, had no difficulty in explaining the causes which had vitiated his calculations.<sup>2</sup> They were :—

1. Purchase of large numbers of transport animals, partly as a measure of improved organization, partly on account of owners' unwillingness to hire out their beasts.

2. Purchase and transportation to the front and along the lines of communication of six months' supplies, a precautionary measure rendered necessary by uncertainty as to the duration of the war.

3. Enormous increase in the price of grain and other supplies purchased in India, due to increasing demand and growing scarcity.

4. Similar increase in the prices of firewood, forage, and other articles procurable in Afghanistan.

<sup>1</sup> This sum did not include the capitation value of the pensions for the wounded, or for the families of those who had died or been killed.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Minute dated 1st May, 1880.

5. Raising the wages of all followers north of the Jhelam and supplying them with half-rations, in consequence of the unpopularity of service in Afghanistan, and the competition in the labour market of the railway authorities, engaged in constructing the line to Rawal Pindi.

6. Fortifying all important positions, and erecting works for the shelter and protection of troops at Kabul and along the lines of communication.

7. Exhaustion of local sources of supply, both of the necessities of life and of the animals required for their transportation, an exhaustion which compelled the Commissariat and Transport Departments to go ever further and further afield in their efforts to keep the troops beyond the frontier in a state of efficiency.

From a consideration of all these points Sir E. Johnson arrived at the conclusion, that in such operations as those in which the Indian Government was engaged, their cost increased in a progressive ratio, week by week, with their continuance ; and he followed up the enunciation of this principle by the confession that, in preparing the war estimates for 1880-81, he had failed to appreciate the main fact of the progressive rates of expenditure, necessarily increasing through an expansion both of the period and the scope of the operations which had since been developed, and by generously taking upon himself all responsibility for the financial blunders of the budget.

Less frank than the Military Member of Council, Sir J. Strachey defended both his colleague and himself on the ground that they had "been misled by accounts which were, in themselves, so far as they went, perfectly accurate, but which, nevertheless, failed to show the actual expenditure of the war," just as if it were not the special duty of a Finance Minister to see that the accounts submitted to him were not only "accurate so far as they went," but accurate to the last rupee expended. It is impossible to conceive on what lines Sir John



Strachey framed his budget in the absence of the returns of the local treasuries ; called for in the end, they enabled him to discover the deficit, and to disentangle from the mass of disbursements contained in them, the share of expenditure to be debited to military operations, and what he did in the end, he could have done at the beginning.

But, quite apart from the specific errors which falsified the budget of 1880-81, the inadequacy of the sum put down as the past, present, and prospective cost of military operations should have been apparent to the Viceroy and every member of his Council ; for it was not a first Afghan War in which they were engaged, but a second, and the accounts of its predecessor were on record for comparison and guidance. It is true that the first lasted a year longer than the second—three and a half years against two and a half—and cost two millions less ; but, in the former, fewer troops were employed than in the latter ; no lines of communication were held ; the proportion of European to Native troops, and of cavalry and artillery to infantry, was much smaller ; and the equipment of all three arms far less expensive ; so that the factors making for economy in its conduct more than outweighed the cost of its longer duration. But to profit by the experience of others was the last thing to enter into the Viceroy's mind. From the day when three ill-equipped armies entered Afghanistan, without maps and without access to the vast stores of knowledge hidden away in Macgregor's Gazetteer ; or, to go further back still, from the day when Lord Lytton wrote lightly of marching to the Oxus, and set down the expense of a permanent occupation of Afghanistan as a trifle hardly to be taken into account in framing an Afghan policy, ignorance and contempt of facts marked every step taken by the Head of the Indian Government, and most of his subordinates were as ready as he to live in a fool's paradise. The letter to Lord Cranbrook in which Lord Lytton repudiated all responsibility for the gigantic financial blunder which had disgraced his administration, is the best possible evidence of his unfitness for his high office, revealing, as it does, his inability

to grasp the principle, tardily discovered by Sir E. Johnson, of progressive rates of expenditure in war, or the still more vital truth that, war once begun, expenditure must be regulated by military needs, not by the wishes of its author.

"Sir Edwin Johnson," so the Viceroy told his correspondent, "has written a Minute (published at his request) in which he takes upon himself the whole personal responsibility for what has occurred, and endeavours to explain how it happened. But I can neither understand nor accept his explanations. For not a single additional military charge has been sanctioned by me since his estimates were framed and submitted with confidence to the Financial Department, which adopted them without distrust. Nor have the known conditions and prospects of the campaign in any wise altered since then; and the calculations on which Sir E. Johnson now professes to have framed his estimates, have had no warrant from myself or the Political Department. Ever since the commencement of the first campaign in Afghanistan, I have laboured without ceasing, and under great difficulties, to keep down military expenditure. You know something of my later efforts in this direction. In the course of them I have frequently rejected the costly and ill-considered proposals of my military advisers, and have been taken to task by the Duke of Cambridge and others for so doing."<sup>1</sup>

Lord Lytton's bewilderment at finding military expenditure refusing to fit itself to the estimates sanctioned by him, and prices going up without any warrant from the political department, is touching in its naiveté; and so is his picture of himself as the one true economist, struggling against the extravagance of his military advisers. An earlier letter to Lord Cranbrook throws light on the efforts to stem expenditure of which he boasts. "I do hope," so he wrote immediately after the relief of Sherpur, "that our military

<sup>1</sup> To Lord Cranbrook, May 11th, 1880. (*Letters of Robert, First Earl of Lytton*, p. 213.)

authorities will not encourage the foolish cry which always re-arises on occasions like this, for big battalions in a country where it is almost impossible to feed small ones. Had I given in to this cry at the outset of the campaign, what would have been the position of General Roberts during the last week? (the week of the siege). Absolutely untenable."<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible not to feel sympathy with a Commander flung with an insignificant, ill-equipped force into the heart of Afghanistan, driven by his necessities, and the loss of his communications, to resort to methods which raised the whole country against him, and when the paucity of his troops had nearly brought about their destruction, expected to be thankful to the wisdom which had limited their numbers. That small battalions had little charm for General Roberts during the ten days, when he and they were shut into an enclosure three times too large for them to defend, is shown by his peremptory orders to Gough to hasten, at all hazards, to his assistance. Reinforcements, in the end, had to be given him, at greater cost than would have been incurred by doubling, in the beginning, the size of his force, and waiting to despatch it till it could be furnished with sufficient supplies to render it practically independent of local resources.

<sup>1</sup> To Lord Cranbrook, Secretary of State for India, December 31st, 1879. (*Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, pp. 394, 395.)

## CHAPTER XXIX

### Beginning of Negotiations with Abdur Rahman

IF the state of the Indian finances, in 1880, called loudly for a cessation of hostilities, the political outlook during the early part of the year was unfavourable to the object—release from responsibility for order in Afghanistan—which had come to be uppermost in the thoughts and wishes of the British and Indian Governments. In Kandahar, a man had, indeed, been found willing to assume the title of an independent ruler ; but so little faith had Sher Ali Khan in his ability to maintain himself in the position to which he had been raised, that the curious spectacle presented itself of the British authorities insisting on safeguarding the dignity of their nominee by withdrawing their troops to a distance from his capital, and the nominee pleading for them to be left at its gates, if not within its walls, proposing to send his family to India, and hinting his readiness to follow them thither and accept a pension in lieu of a throne.<sup>1</sup> But if the settlement arrived at in Southern Afghanistan offered no prospect of stability, except that afforded by the presence of a strong British force, elsewhere no advance had been made towards the establishment of a Government

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 31.

“I am bound to confess that I know of no other Sirdar who would have filled the post (thrust on him, as it were) as faithfully towards us as did the Wali. He was an honourable man and did not keep matters from us. I saw a good deal of him and can speak from experience. The mistake we made was in supposing that Afghans would ever submit to a prince supported by foreign bayonets.” (*Comments on the Campaign in Southern Afghanistan*, 1880, by Colonel F. J. S. Adam, Assistant Quartermaster-General.)

of any kind. The British Government, apparently at the suggestion of Lord Lytton,<sup>1</sup> had offered to make over Herat to Persia, "under sufficient guarantees for her good administration of it and for her adequate protection of British and Indian interests at that point, and with a special reservation of our right to occupy the place with British forces in certain eventualities."<sup>2</sup> But Persia had declined to accept the gift coupled with such terms, and weighted with the necessity of fighting Ayub Khan for its possession. Things were no better at Kabul, though, stimulated to activity by the knowledge of Lord Lytton's anxiety to lighten as quickly as possible the burden which his Afghan policy had imposed upon India, Sir F. Roberts spent much time in scanning the ranks of the Afghan princes in search of "the most competent and least untrustworthy Sirdar" to recommend to the Indian Government as the successor of Yakub Khan. Wali Mahomed, the enemy and rival of the deposed Amir, had, at first, seemed the most likely person to take his place, but the doubts as to the sincerity of his British proclivities which had taken possession of Roberts's mind on the 11th of December, and subsequent proof of Wali Mahomed's lack of the qualities needed in the ruler of a divided and lawless people, led to his name being struck off the list of possible candidates for the post. Other members of the royal family were successively passed in review; but of none of these could it be predicted that he would be strong enough to rule Kabul, and at the same time unambitious enough to be content with the position of "a Native ruler in subordinate alliance with ourselves, supported and controlled by a strong British Cantonment established at some suitable point."<sup>3</sup>

No one satisfactory to the Indian Government presenting himself and the reasons for retirement growing daily more pressing, it was decided, at last, to leave the selection of their future Head to the Afghans themselves, their freedom of choice being limited in one

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.



direction only, but that the direction in which the majority of Afghans were still inclined to look. The leaders of the tribal combination, which had dissolved, as a military organization, after the raising of the siege of Sherpur, had given proof of their continued political unity by addressing to Sir F. Roberts letters containing a demand for Yakub Khan's restoration—and to Yakub Khan's restoration Lord Lytton was resolved never to consent. In explaining to Lord Cranbrook his reasons for this resolution, he asked, after enumerating all the deposed Amir's imputed misdeeds and shortcomings, whether it was conceivable that a prince, now virtually a State prisoner at Meerut, should, if restored by us to the throne of Kabul, abide one moment longer than he could possibly help by the terms of any agreement with us that was based on the dismemberment of his kingdom, the permanent alienation of two of its fairest provinces (Kandahar and Herat), and the gift of one of them (Herat) by a Foreign Power to such an hereditary and hated rival as Persia? <sup>1</sup> There was but one possible answer to this question—fidelity to such a treaty could not be looked for from the Meerut prisoner, so the Viceroy had the approval of the Secretary of State in instructing Roberts "to proclaim in Kabul that Yakub Khan's abdication was irrevocable." <sup>2</sup>

Just when there seemed least prospect of finding a prince for "the diminished kingdom" came a rumour that Abdur Rahman, the nephew and defeated rival of Amir Shere Ali, emerging from his twelve-year-long exile in Russian Turkestan, had crossed the Amur and occupied Ghorī; that Sultan Murad Khan had joined him, and that troops sent by Ghulam Hyder Khan to oppose his advance had gone over to him. Major St. John, who was at Calcutta with the Viceroy when the news reached India, sent by Stewart to discuss matters connected with the new order of things to be established at Kandahar, at once suggested the desirability of entering into communication with a man

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 396.

who had certainly come with the intention of establishing himself on his father's throne, and whose past career had given evidence of the strength of character and ability in which all his relatives seemed to be conspicuously lacking.

Catching eagerly at the suggestion, Lord Lytton, with the somewhat reluctant consent of the Home Government, instructed Mr. Lepel Griffin, who was then on his way to Kabul, "to undertake the whole diplomatic and administrative superintendence of affairs and negotiations, in subordinate consultation with the military commander," to send conciliatory messages to the Sirdar as soon as the truth of the rumours concerning him had been placed beyond a doubt.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Griffin arrived at Kabul on the 19th of March; and on the 1st of April, by which time all uncertainty as to Abdur Rahman's presence in Afghan Turkostan had been set at rest, he despatched a messenger to Kunduz, where the Sirdar had halted to organize the troops that were gathering round him, charged with a brief note of inquiry into the object of the exile's return, and explicit verbal instructions as to the assurances which the British Government was prepared to give him.

The messenger returned to Kabul on the 21st, bringing with him a letter characterized by Lord Lytton as "very friendly and very clever," that contained little but an expression of the writer's hope that, thenceforward, the tribes of Afghanistan might live in peace under the protection of their two powerful neighbours.<sup>2</sup> From this letter and from the report of an interview to which their messenger had been admitted, Roberts and Griffin came to the conclusion that

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, pp. 402, 403.

"Prior to Mr. Lepel Griffin's arrival the responsible management of our Political affairs in Northern Afghanistan had devolved entirely on the Military Commander, General Roberts—but to Mr. Griffin there had been entrusted a certain power of initiative and control in dealing with the affairs of the Political department, which formed a new element requiring a considerable amount of fine tact on the part of all officers concerned." (*Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, p. 345.)

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 22.

Abdur Rahman had been sent by Russia, or, at least, was averse to quarrelling with her; but, so far were they from thinking him ineligible on that account, that they now proposed deputing two or three men of position to offer him the Amirship, under certain conditions which the Indian Government regarded as essential.

Meanwhile, however, the Viceroy's conviction that Abdur Rahman was the much needed *Deus ex machina*, who was to smooth the way for the British retirement from Afghanistan, had lost much of its strength. Originating at a time when the Sirdar had practically no following and his recognition might therefore count as an act of grace on the part of the British Government, it faded away as that following grew, and the situation was seen to be changing so quickly in his favour that there seemed a prospect of his appearing "suddenly before Kabul at the head of a united nation, and dictating terms to us, instead of accepting them from us."<sup>1</sup> As a natural consequence of these forebodings, Lord Lytton hesitated to commit himself to any open pronouncement in Abdur Rahman's favour, and that hesitation was reflected in the speech made by Mr. Lepel Griffin at a Durbar held at Kabul on the 12th of April. There were chiefs and malliks of many tribes present on this occasion, amongst them representatives of Mahomed Jan and other leaders in the December uprising, who had been persuaded by the Mustaufi, Sirdar Habibulla, to lay their wishes as to the future of their country before the British authorities. With many of these men Mr. Griffin had already held private interviews, and now he explained to all, publicly and collectively, the intentions of the British Government with regard to the settlement of Afghanistan, and that explanation contained only a veiled allusion to Abdur Rahman.<sup>2</sup> The demand for the restoration of Yakub Khan was rejected; but, as regarded his successor, Mr. Griffin announced that the Government still had an open mind, and that the wishes of those who desired

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 18.

the choice to fall on Sirdar Wali Mahomed Khan, Sirdar Hashim Khan, Sirdar Musa Jan, Sirdar Ayub Khan, or any other member of the ruling family would "be remembered and considered."<sup>1</sup>

This neutral attitude could not, however, be long maintained. Abdur Rahman was drawing nearer, and, as the number of his adherents grew, it became more and more apparent that he must either be opposed or accepted as the future ruler of Kabul. The interests of India forbade the former course, so the latter had to be adopted, and on the 27th of April, Mr. Griffin was authorized to inform Abdur Rahman of the Government's intention to evacuate Kabul and of their "desire to take that opportunity of unconditionally transferring to his authority the whole of the country from which our troops would (will) be withdrawn." Griffin was further instructed to invite the Sirdar to proceed to Kabul, there to settle in conference with General Stewart and himself "such preliminary arrangements as might best promote the undisturbed establishment of his future Government."<sup>2</sup>

Having decided to sanction and support Abdur Rahman's candidature, Lord Lytton now occupied himself with plans for perpetuating the break-up of the Afghan Kingdom, and for impressing the future ruler of Kabul with a sense of his impotence as opposed to the great British Empire, which would always be strong enough to invade his territories at any moment, hold them at its pleasure, and evacuate them at its convenience. The pursuit of these two objects brought out a divergence of view between the Viceroy and the British authorities at Kabul; the former holding it to be necessary to tell Abdur Rahman distinctly that the British troops would leave Northern Afghanistan not later than October, and that Kandahar was irrevocably separated from Kabul, while Roberts and Griffin deprecated the fixing of a date for the evacuation, or making any mention of Kandahar. They carried their opposition so far as to omit both points from the letter in which

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

they conveyed to the Sirdar the Indian Government's acquiescence in his candidature, an omission regretted by Lord Lytton, who was further annoyed by Griffin's allusion to the establishment of a friendly Amir at Kabul. "Our position," so he wrote to Sir D. Stewart, on whom meanwhile had devolved the chief responsibility in connection with the conduct of the negotiations, "is really a very simple and perfectly plain one—it requires no finessing and . . . it distinctly excludes not only all negotiations or bargaining with Abdur Rahman, but also all pretence of establishing a friendly Amir at Kabul. . . . Our position is a strong one so long as we avow it plainly, and act on it firmly. Otherwise it may become a very false one." <sup>1</sup>

The near future was to prove that the position on the creating of which Lord Lytton prided himself, was less simple and strong than he believed; but he was spared the mortification of having to accommodate his policy to the real facts of the case. On the 28th of April, more than a fortnight before the letter just quoted from was written, there had been a change of administration at home, and the Viceroy who had been sent out to reverse the policy of Lord Canning and Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook, resigned with the Ministry which had appointed and supported him, though he offered to remain at his post till the end of the hot season, "provided only that during the interval he should not be required to carry out measures to which it would be obviously impossible for him to set his hand." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, pp. 418, 419.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 422.



## CHAPTER XXX

### Disturbances on the Lines of Communication

#### DISTRIBUTION AND MOVEMENT OF TROOPS IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN

THE news of the enormous deficit in the Indian finances consequent on the unexpected costliness of the war, which awaited Stewart on coming again into touch with telegraphs and posts, made him at once turn his attention towards possible reductions of expenditure. A personal inspection of the fortifications which were still in course of construction around Sherpur, showed him one direction in which money might be saved with distinct gain to his troops, who were in danger of being so tied down to the defence of walls as to lose their capacity for taking the field, and he ordered that work on them should cease; but there his economies ended, for reductions in the strength of the artillery and cavalry suggested by him were never carried out.<sup>1</sup> Possibly the proposals, excellent in themselves, were not sanctioned by the Indian Government, struggling with the problem of how to keep up the forces in the field in the face of the difficulty of obtaining recruits. As it was the British regiments under orders for home had been directed to stand fast, and the Authorities in England had been called upon to send out four infantry regiments before the hot weather

<sup>1</sup> "May 6.—Telegraphed to-day to ask Bright whether he could send back 8th Hussars and a battery of Artillery." (*Macgregor's Life*, Vol. II. p. 198.)

"May 11.—Took Stewart some papers and got through them satisfactorily. Went over list of Staff-officers and determined on extensive reductions of Staff and regiments—two Brigadier-Generals and Staff and two cavalry regiments. We have too much cavalry on the line; there are 7½ regiments above the passes, which is nonsense." (*Ibid.* p. 201.)

began. But it is more probable that the day never came when the Generals on the lines of communication could have spared a single man of any arm. All along the Khyber line fighting was constantly going on. No sooner was one gathering of tribesmen dispersed than another began to collect; hardly was one outrage avenged than another was perpetrated. Things had been bad in the old year—they were worse in the new, largely owing to the entrance into the field of a fresh enemy.<sup>1</sup> On reoccupying Kabul after the siege of Sherpur, Roberts had seized the wife of Yakub Khan, and the wife and mother of Yahiya Khan, and deported them to India. All three ladies had encouraged and supported the rising, and, the opportunity presenting itself, would have done the same again; but the wife of Yakub Khan was the daughter of the Khan of Lalpura, and the slight gain to the tranquillity of Kabul that might be looked for from her removal, was dearly purchased at the cost of making enemies of the Mohmands. On hearing of her banishment, the aggrieved father called his clansmen to arms. The summons was quickly obeyed, and, on the 12th of January, four hundred of his people crossed the Kabul River and attacked the British post at Ali Boghan. Luckily, it had been reinforced that very morning by a company of the 12th Foot, and the assault was beaten off; but, unencumbered by baggage and light of foot, the Mohmands were safe back across the river before a force sent from Jellalabad could cut off their retreat. On the 14th, five thousand men of the same tribe, with twenty-five standards, assembled in the plain of Kam Dakka, while three thousand occupied the Gara Heights, three miles east of Dakka. The 1st Madras Infantry and four hundred rifles of the 4th Regiment were hastily sent up from Peshawar to strengthen Lundi Kotal, General Doran's Head-Quarters,

<sup>1</sup> A tragic incident occurred, on the 5th of January, when five men of the Carabineers, belonging to a detachment of Cavalry which had been reconnoitring towards the Laghman Valley, in recrossing the Kabul River missed the ford and, getting into a rapid, were swept away and drowned.—H. B. H.

and a combined movement from that post and from Dakka against the two gatherings was arranged. Troops from the latter place under Colonel T. W. R. Boisragon, starting at 11 a.m., were to capture the Gara Heights, whilst troops from Lundi Kotal under General Doran, starting six hours earlier, were to move on Kam Dakka by Tar Sapparai to intercept the retreating enemy. The position on the Gara Heights had been strengthened by sangars, but these Boisragon enfiladed with his guns, and then by a frontal attack drove the enemy out of their position ; but again the force sent to get in the enemy's rear failed to arrive in time, and the Mohmands made good their retreat. The united forces spent the night at Kam Dakka, waiting for the baggage train to come up, and during the halt Boisragon's men crossed the Kabul River on rafts and destroyed the village of Rena. Doran had intended to follow up the enemy ; but, as the country into which they had retired was unknown, and the three days' rations carried for the troops were nearly consumed, this plan had to be abandoned, and on the 18th each force returned to its own station.

Towards the end of January, an expedition for which preparations had been in progress at the time when Gough received his summons to Kabul, was carried out. A force under Lieutenant-Colonel G. E. Walker, accompanied by General Bright, entered the Laghman Valley, where it remained, reconnoitring in all directions, for nearly a month. There was no fighting, for Azmatulla Khan and his followers had withdrawn before the occupation.

On the 10th of March, so large a gathering of Safis in Tagao threatened Seh Baba, that that post had to be reinforced ; and, a little later, Bright found it necessary to strengthen the garrisons of Pezwan and Jagdallak, and in consequence had to call up an infantry regiment from the rear. On the 22nd, two officers of the 51st Light Infantry, Lieutenants B. S. Thurlow and H. A. S. Read, were attacked while riding between Jagdallak Fort and Jagdallak Kotal. Thurlow was mortally wounded, and Read, in trying to carry him off, had a desperate

hand-to-hand struggle with an Afghan, and though he finally blew out his assailant's brains, the approach of a large number of Ghilzais obliged him to abandon his friend's body, which was not recovered till the following day. The next morning a hundred and fifty transport bullocks were carried off between Pezwan and Safed Sang; and, on the 24th, news came to hand that the Mohmands under the personal leadership of the Khan of Lalpura were collecting at Goshta, a village on the left bank of the Kabul River, Sirdar Azim Khan, the newly appointed Governor of the district, being this time the object of their hostility. Doran immediately organized a flying column, but the Mohmands dispersed before the rafts that he had had prepared could set his troops across the river. Next day, twelve hundred Shinwaris and Khugianis delivered so determined an attack on Fort Battye that the weak garrison—only a hundred rifles of Madras Infantry and fifty sabres of the 4th Bengal Cavalry under Major E. B. Blenkinsop—would have been overwhelmed but for the accident that a hundred and fifty men of the 31st Punjab Infantry, under Lieutenant F. C. C. Angelo, who were *en route* to Gandamak, had halted there for the night. One party of the enemy rushed the low southern wall and from its foot poured a heavy fire into the interior of the fort, by which Angelo and three of his men were killed and Subadar Major Sher Sing and several men wounded, showers of stones injuring others, whilst a second party burst into the Transport lines. Both bodies were at last driven off, but darkness and the weakness of the garrison forbade pursuit. To avenge this raid, a fine of 5,000 rupees was imposed upon the Khugianis, and the payment of it enforced by a combined movement of troops from Gandamak and Jellalabad who invaded the Wazir Valley, destroying the crops and blowing up the village defences. Fearing further reprisals the headmen on the following day brought in three thousand five hundred rupees, and on their undertaking to pay the balance of the fine, the troops withdrew.

Meanwhile, in the Khyber Pass, men of the Zakka Khel tribe had

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begun raiding, but were driven off by the Jezailchis at Half Chah, assisted by a detachment of the 32nd Pioneers. On the 11th of April, Arbuthnot's moveable column, strengthened specially for the occasion, and accompanied by General Bright, started out to punish the Ghilzais implicated in Thurlow's murder. The troops bivouacked near Mazulla Khan's fort and during the night were much harassed by the enemy, some of whom actually crept into the camp and wounded four artillerymen beside their guns. The chief of this section of the tribe came in on the 13th to treat; but his followers continued on the defensive, and when next day Colonel Ball-Acton, with two Mountain guns, a troop of the Carabineers, and six hundred infantry, pushed on to reconnoitre the Awazangani Gorge, it was found to be very strongly held, and though the infantry succeeded in dislodging the Ghilzais from the western side of the pass, the fire of the artillery failed to clear the eastern, and Arbuthnot, who had accompanied the column, judging that it was too late to renew the attack, ordered Acton to recall his men. In the retreat Captain C. H. Hamilton, Royal Artillery, and Captain J. V. Nugent, 51st Light Infantry, and a dhoolie-bearer were severely, and Lieutenant E. Palmer of the Commissariat Department mortally wounded. On the 16th the Engineers blew up Fort Mazulla Khan and the force withdrew, followed all the way by clouds of tribesmen, who kept up a continuous fire at long ranges, by which four men of the 51st and one Gurkha were wounded.

Such, in brief, had been the history of the line on which the British forces at Kabul depended for all their military stores and a part of their ordinary supplies, from the 1st of January, 1880, up to the date of Sir D. Stewart's arrival in that city. A few days later came the news that raiders from the Laghman Valley had driven off a thousand head of cattle and a hundred and eighty sheep from under the very walls of Jellalabad, and, though pursued, had succeeded in getting away with most of their booty.



Up to the middle of April, a different state of affairs had prevailed in the Kuram, where a severe winter had checked raids ; but the cold which kept the people in their homes, filled the British hospitals and killed hundreds of transport animals. Later on, a serious outbreak of rinderpest occurred among the commissariat cattle ; foot and mouth disease reduced the camels to a miserable state of weakness ; and in an accidental fire which broke out, on the 21st of March, in the lines of the 13th Bengal Lancers, sixteen horses were burnt to death, thirty seriously injured, and all the tents and accoutrements of half the regiment were destroyed.

When the health of the troops began to improve with the advent of warmer weather, the tribes woke to fresh activity. Rumours were soon afloat that Mahomed Jan was preparing to oppose any force that should attempt to return to India by the Shutargardan Pass ; and on the very day of Stewart's entry into Kabul, the post at Chapri was surprised by Mangals, who broke into the cattle yard, killed Lieutenant O. B. Wood of the Transport Department, two sepoy, and eight dhoolie-bearers, and wounded a non-commissioned officer, a sepoy, and fourteen followers. On the news of this bold outrage reaching Thal, Brigadier-General H. R. L. Newdigate, who had succeeded Tytler, sent out parties to scour the country, but the robbers had made good their escape into Khost.

If the state of things on Stewart's present and prospective lines of communication was unsatisfactory, the condition of affairs at Kabul also gave him cause for anxiety. With twenty thousand men under his immediate command, he had no reason to fear attack, and was able to look forward with confidence to his retirement when the day for retirement should come ; but the accession of strength to which he owed his sense of security, doubled his commissariat difficulties and compelled him to adopt measures which his political instinct condemned. The supplies that came up from India were so scanty and irregular that, in one way or the other, his force had

to live on the country, and as the requisite food and fodder could not be brought into Kabul day by day, the troops must needs go out in search of them. The Third Division had at once been quartered on the Logar Valley, a district rich enough to feed its own garrison and to furnish a surplus for sale in Kabul; but the inhabitants of the intervening strip of country were very hostile, and its roads infested by armed bands, who made it difficult for convoys to get through; so, to relieve the pressure on the Commissariat, and for the purpose of settling the country and opening it up for the free passage of supplies, Brigadier-General Baker, accompanied by Sir F. Roberts, left Kabul on the 8th of May in command of a strong force—ten Mountain guns, six and a half squadrons of Cavalry, five battalions of Infantry, and two Companies of Sappers and Miners—with instructions to move about and maintain his troops on contributions from the villages on his line of march. Proceeding slowly up the Logar Valley, Baker reached Zahidabad on the 15th of May, and from thence sent out a party to destroy a fort belonging to Padshah Khan. On the 17th, he halted on the right bank of the Logar nearly opposite the village of Hissarak, where the Third Division was encamped; and then, crossing the river, moved into Maidan, where he remained till the 6th of June, when, having got all he could out of the district, he returned to Kabul.

Meanwhile the Third Division, the greater part of which had been shifted from Hissarak to Deh-i-Moghalan, was practically in a state of siege. Supplies could hardly be obtained, and pickets were fired into, night after night. To guard against surprise, General Hills had the growing crops in the neighbourhood of camp cut down, and sangars erected on all adjacent heights.

On the 17th of June, Hills received by heliograph the order to leave the Logar Valley and march to Charasiab. The order was promptly obeyed; but, on arriving at Charasiab, the whole country for many miles round Kabul was found to be eaten up, and as supplies

from the Logar Valley ceased to come in the moment the troops that collected them were withdrawn, Hills had no alternative but to lead his Division back to the one district where some amount of food for man and beast could be wrung from the inhabitants. In his absence armed bands of Zurmatis and other hillmen had quartered themselves on the Logar villages, and done their best to persuade the people to rise against their foreign oppressors; but the influence of their headmen, who had promised the Political Officer, Major Euan Smith, not to take part in any combination against the British Government, kept them quiet, and on the return of the Division the hillmen withdrew from the villages; they continued however to hang about, and towards the end of the month collected in such numbers in the upper Logar Valley that Hills determined to disperse them before reinforcements, reported to have been sent by Mahomed Jan, could join them. Acting on this decision, he sent out Brigadier-General Palliser with the whole available strength of the Cavalry Brigade, at 3.30 a.m. on the 1st of July, to locate and attack them.

Palliser made straight for Patkao-i-Shahana, a village near Kushi, separated from the lower Logar Valley by a succession of ridges. On approaching the first of these, a few of the enemy's horse were observed watching the advance of the British Column. The scouts quickly drove in these vedettes; but the main body of the enemy was not descried till the summit of the last range had been gained, when it was seen to be retreating in compact formation in the direction of the Altimur Pass. To lull the Zurmatis into a sense of security, Palliser drew in his scouts and detached a squadron of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, under Captain J. H. Broome, to watch Patkao-i-Shahana, and call upon its headmen to make their submission; but the Zurmatis, wisely distrustful, continued their retreat, and when Palliser at last burst through the screen of hills, they were far enough away to be able to scatter, before the cavalry, greatly impeded in their onrush by the excessively broken nature of the ground, could overtake them;

and, as a consequence, the engagement that ensued resolved itself into a series of hand-to-hand encounters, in which the tribesmen fought with desperate courage. In one of these single combats Captain S. Barrow, Orderly Officer to the General, and his assailant, a stalwart, well-armed Afghan, were both severely wounded. The pursuit, which lasted two hours, extended nearly to the foot of the pass, and when, at 9 a.m., Palliser ordered the recall to be sounded, the enemy's dispersion had been so complete that hardly a man was left in sight. Their loss was said to be two hundred, whilst the British casualties amounted to three men killed, and one officer and twenty-eight men wounded ; also eight horses killed and twenty-five wounded. The wounded men were brought back to camp on litters improvised by tying lances together with the men's turbans.

The success of this brilliant affair was largely due to the courage and energy of Lieutenant-Colonel C. S. Maclean of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, who commanded the leading troops ; Major J. R. B. Atkinson of the same regiment, and Captain L. T. Bishop of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, also distinguished themselves.

Whilst Hills was on his futile march to Charasiab, Charles Gough was leading his Brigade into Kohistan, partly in search of a region which had not yet been entirely drained of supplies, and partly to hinder the agitation consequent on Abdur Rahman's advance coming to a dangerous head. Gough marched first to Killa Ghulam Hyder, the fort in which Baker, hurrying back to Sherpur on the 12th of December, had once thought of leaving his commissariat and spare transport, and from this point threw out strong detachments into Maidan to break up a reported gathering of Ghazis. The enemy retired without awaiting attack, and having secured the safety of his left flank, Gough turned northward into the Paghman Valley, where he was hospitably received by the Khan, formerly an officer in Hodson's Horse. But even with the goodwill of its chief, the district could not long maintain an alien force ; and, on the 25th of June,

the Brigade moved on to Mir Karez, the scene of Macpherson's successful engagement of the 10th of December. The inhabitants of the group of hamlets comprised under that name, proved friendly; but cavalry patrols sent out to reconnoitre towards Istalif were fired on from a village where Mir Bacha, who was said to be in the neighbourhood, had established an outpost. A strong detachment of all arms soon drove out these men, and on their flight the Malliks of many villages came into camp, followed, on the 5th of July, by the Headmen of the town of Istalif. Gough remained at Mir Karez till the 12th of July, when, hearing that Abdur Rahman had crossed the Hindu Kush, he shifted his camp, first to Pai Nao and then, three days later, to Killa Ahmed Khan, with a view to protecting the officers whom Sir Donald Stewart might send out to bring the long protracted negotiations with that prince to a conclusion. To support this northward movement, Macpherson's Brigade<sup>1</sup> was ordered to Abdul Gafar in the Chardeh Valley, and at the same time the 19th Bengal Cavalry, a squadron of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, and the 15th Sikhs were called up from Hills's Division to strengthen the much reduced garrison of Sherpur.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. Combined movements are seldom successful in a mountainous country, where every by-path is a line of retreat to a people who carry their food and ammunition on their backs, and whose activity of movement and accurate knowledge of the ground make it easy for them to concentrate against either column. To surround an Afghan gathering is as difficult as to close in upon a

<sup>1</sup> Constitution of Brigade :—

Four Guns No. 2 Mountain Battery.

One Squadron 9th Lancers.

92nd Highlanders.

28th Punjab Infantry.

45th Sikhs.



herd of Ibex, and it is therefore wiser to operate against such gatherings with a single strong force than with two, or more, weaker forces, out of touch with each other.

OBSERVATION II. The destruction of forts is unwise. These so-called forts are really walled villages, and to destroy them is to convert every one of their inhabitants into an enemy, and, probably, many of them into raiders. If near camp, they should be occupied; if at a distance, yet likely to prove troublesome, the right thing is to hold some of the headmen as hostages, and to turn their captivity to account by impressing them with a sense of British humanity and forbearance.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### Conclusion of Negotiations with Abdur Rahman

#### A FIRST DESPATCH AND A LAST MINUTE

WITH four divisional commanders under him with whom he did not like to interfere, Sir Donald Stewart's position at Kabul was, as he himself expressed it, that of "a sort of Commander-in-Chief";<sup>1</sup> and he was able to devote himself to the consideration of the political problem, on the solution of which the date and manner of the British evacuation of Northern Afghanistan so largely depended. There had been a moment of uncertainty as regarded his relation to that problem, a telegram from Lord Lytton seeming to imply that the conduct of the negotiations with Abdur Rahman was to remain in the hands of Mr. Lepel Griffin; but a plain intimation from Sir Donald, that any attempt to limit his authority to purely military matters must coincide with his recall, brought him the assurance that he was to be supreme in all matters;<sup>2</sup> and before the end of May he was relieved of any anxiety that he may have felt as to the action of the new British Cabinet, by a telegram from the India Office directing the Viceroy to give him full political as well as full military powers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> "I thought I might have escaped from this place, but it is not so. The Viceroy said the interests of the Empire required me to remain here in command, and, as he finally decided that I am to be supreme in all matters, there is nothing for it but to stay. The extraordinary part of the matter is that when I said I would not remain if Griffin was to be independent, the Viceroy said this was never intended, though his telegram almost said as much." (*Ibid.* pp. 347, 348.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 352.

The news of the result of the General Election which had been held in England whilst he was on his march from Kandahar to Kabul, added, temporarily, to Stewart's perplexities; for knowing the dislike entertained by the Liberal party to the war and to the policy of which it was the outcome, he could feel no certainty that the lines on which Lord Lytton had instructed him to work for a settlement, would commend themselves to Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues.<sup>1</sup> It was not till the 11th of June that his doubts on this head were set at rest by the receipt of a letter from Lord Ripon, written at sea, on his way out to India, with nearly every word of which he found himself in thorough accord.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile there had been no opportunity of taking steps towards the constitution of a Native Government in Northern Afghanistan, for Abdur Rahman's answer to Mr. Lepel Griffin's letter of the 30th of April was not received in Kabul till the 2nd of June, and until his candidature was rejected, no other could be entertained. So far as that answer was concerned, matters remained pretty much as they had been, for it contained nothing but general expressions of friendliness and hope of British support; but to the members of the Mission charged to convey Griffin's letter to him, Abdur Rahman had propounded four questions, on the answers to which his future movements must depend:—

1. What were to be the boundaries of his kingdom? was Kandahar, as of old, to be included in it?
2. Would a European Envoy and a British Force be stationed within its limits?
3. In what relations would he be expected to stand to Russia?
4. What benefits was the British Government prepared to confer on him and his countrymen?

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> "Received a very interesting letter from Lord Ripon on our policy in Afghanistan. There is hardly a word in it that I do not thoroughly agree with." (*Ibid.* p. 355.)

It was natural that Abdur Rahman should desire explicit information on all these points, and he could not be blamed for asking for it; but the messengers' report of his conversation and general attitude impressed Stewart and Griffin with the conviction that he was trying to gain time in which to strengthen himself, and as time was the one thing that they could least afford to grant, they advised sending him an ultimatum. This the British Government declined to do till the new Viceroy should have had the opportunity of forming an independent judgment on the whole tangled situation; but it was with a full knowledge of Stewart's distrust of Abdur Rahman's professions of friendliness that Lord Ripon, who reached Simla on the 8th of June, met his Council to consider with it the best solution of the problem bequeathed to him by his predecessor. As further aids to coming to wise conclusions, Lord Ripon had also before him the first Despatch of the new Secretary of State for India and the last Minute of the late Viceroy.

Both writers recognized the futility of any attempt to settle the future of Herat; both were anxious that the British withdrawal from Afghanistan should appear to its people in the light of a voluntary movement, decided on as a consequence of the cessation of all serious opposition;<sup>1</sup> but there the agreement between them ended, for whilst Lord Lytton desired to see "the retirement on the two commanding positions of Gandamak and the Kuram headlands" begun at once,<sup>2</sup> Lord Hartington was of opinion that it could not be immediate under any circumstances, and might, probably, upon sanitary grounds alone "require to be postponed until the month of November," and on all other points the divergence between them was complete. Lord Lytton, looking out over a weakened and dismembered Afghanistan, took credit for a war which, in his opinion, had made the Indian Government independent of the goodwill of any Afghan ruler; Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, pp. 29-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, Vol. II. pp. 428-434.

Hartington, with the same prospect before him, saw cause for deep regret in the fact that the only results of two successful campaigns should be the disintegration of a State which it was desired to see strong, friendly, and independent, the assumption of fresh and unwelcome liabilities in regard to one of its provinces, and a condition of anarchy throughout the remainder of the country. To keep Afghanistan weak was the aim of the one ; to make her strong was the object of the other : so the Minute advised Lord Ripon to impress upon Abdur Rahman that Kandahar was irrevocably severed from Kabul, and the Despatch invited him to inquire into the engagements that had been entered into with Sirdar Sher Ali or any other chief, with a view to seeing whether different arrangements could honourably be substituted for them ; arrangements which might make it possible to offer to any ruler, who should prove acceptable to the majority of the Afghan people, the opportunity of extending his dominions to the limits assigned to them by the treaty of Gandamak. Neither writer was sanguine as to the result of the negotiations with Abdur Rahman ; both saw that, if they came to nothing, the Afghans must be left to choose their own head ; but whilst Lord Hartington was ready to face the probability of their choice falling upon the Ex-Amir, Lord Lytton's last word as Viceroy of India was a passionate protest against reversal of the sentence of perpetual exclusion from the throne of Kabul passed by him upon that prince. 'Reconsider the position of Yakub Khan ; form your own opinion, after careful inquiry into the facts which have been ascertained with regard to his conduct in September 1879, as to whether it is necessary to exclude his claims or those of his son,' were the instructions received by Lord Ripon from the former. 'Take my word for it that Yakub Khan's hands are deeply stained with the innocent blood of Sir Louis Cavagnari and his brave companions' was the demand made upon him by the latter—a demand backed up by the threat of omitting "no means or opportunities available to me of opposing and publicly condemning



the action of the Government of India if hereafter it should restore Yakub Khan to the throne, or otherwise condone his participation in the massacre of the British Embassy."

If in thus attempting to fetter his successor's freedom of judgment and action, Lord Lytton offended against official discipline and etiquette, in denouncing Yakub Khan as a convicted criminal he sinned against justice and truth; and without excuse, for there had been ample time for the blinding effects of the grief and anger born of the shock of Cavagnari's death, to die down in his mind, as they haddied down in the minds of men once as loud as he in their denunciations of the Ex-Amir. There is proof in Macgregor's Diary and in the letters and telegrams of Major-General Vaughan, the *Times* Correspondent at Kabul, that British public opinion in that city had undergone a complete change since the days when any evidence was good enough to hang an Afghan, were he prince or peasant. Sated by vengeance and no longer in fear for their own safety, men had recovered their mental balance, and could see that the massacre of the Mission had been a sudden and spontaneous act, neither instigated by, nor connived at, by the Amir; and this change of view had brought with it a willingness to reverse the sentence of perpetual banishment that had been pronounced against that prince. It is not surprising that Macgregor, who had always believed that Yakub Khan was innocent of the graver charges brought against him, should have been ready to replace him on his throne; nor yet that Stewart, who had escaped the wave of passion which had swept over men at Kabul, should have seen in him the only alternative to Abdur Rahman; but that Roberts, who was as little likely as Lord Lytton himself to acquiesce in the restoration of the murderer of his friend, should have agreed with Stewart and Macgregor, "that it would be the best thing now to send for Yakub,"<sup>1</sup> is very significant. Vaughan's

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Charles Macgregor's Life*, Vol. II. p. 219.

testimony to the change that had come over British public opinion in the Afghan capital is of a more general character, but clear and decided. "As a matter of fact, I believe," so he wrote on the 17th of May, "that all are now perfectly well convinced that the massacre was an unpremeditated act of the fanatical soldiery. . . . I do not believe Yakub guilty, and therefore I think it is much to be regretted that the idea of his resignation was ever entertained for a moment, and still more that after a prolonged, and rigorous confinement, he should have been deported to India."<sup>1</sup> On June the 6th, he went still further, telegraphing that "*convinced as we have always been that Yakub is innocent of the gravest charge against him, I see many advantages in his resuming power.*"<sup>2</sup> The *we* in this telegram stands probably for Roberts and the Officers of his Staff, with whom General Vaughan was closely associated, and the whole sentence proves that they had reached the stage of conversion at which original beliefs are forgotten; and this view is supported by a passage in a letter of the 8th of June, in which Vaughan declared, that "the grave suspicion under which he (Yakub) was deported to India has been long dispelled, and though to restore him involves some sacrifice of consistency, this should not be allowed to weigh for a moment."<sup>3</sup>

As a similar change of feeling had been going on in India, Lord Ripon was as little likely to be influenced by Lord Lytton's assertions as to be frightened by his threats; and if he failed to restore Yakub Khan to the throne of Kabul, this was due to the fact that he found the Government of which he was now the Head, committed to negotiations with Abdur Rahman.

But the time had gone by for Lord Lytton's opinions to carry much weight even with his own party, for events had shown how little confidence could be placed in his judgment. He had led the

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, June 25th, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* June 11th, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* July 16th, 1880.

Beaconsfield Cabinet to believe that Shere Ali's dislike to enter into closer relations with the British Government was simulated—and war, sullenly accepted as an evil from which there was no escape, had proved the reality and intensity of that dislike. He had laughed to scorn Nur Mahomed's reiterated assertion of his Master's inability to protect foreigners in any part of his dominions—a murdered envoy had turned his laughter into mourning. He had prophesied that the hostilities he was provoking would last a few weeks—eighteen months later they were still going on. He had entered on his Vice-royalty despising the teachings of experience,<sup>1</sup> dreaming dreams of “bequeathing to India the supremacy of Central Asia and the revenues of a First-Class power”<sup>2</sup>—and he left her the bigger by two barren provinces, and the poorer by a debt of £20,000,000 sterling.

An accomplished writer, Lord Lytton's despatches and minutes were models of style and displayed an astonishing facility for reasoning from premises to their logical conclusions; but the premises themselves were assumptions, unsupported, or contradicted by facts. Skilful in bringing about the conditions favourable to his ambitious aims, he was incapable of facing the price that must be paid for their realization and took pride in condemning his subordinates to make bricks without straw; an adept in the art of shutting his eyes to dangers which told against his hopes, he flung a British Mission into an armed city, seething with national and religious excitement; and underneath the bitter hatred with which he pursued Yakub Khan, lurked the consciousness that he himself was responsible for that Mission's tragic fate. It would be unjust to deny that Lord Lytton had India's welfare at heart; but his Afghan policy reacted

<sup>1</sup> “Lord Auckland's unhappy Afghan Expedition has been a lasting misfortune to India, for it has paralysed the common-sense of all his successors, and bequeathed to the Government of India a perfectly unreasoning panic about everything that concerns our relations with Afghanistan.” (*Letters of Robert, First Earl of Lytton*, Vol. II. p. 29.)

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 422.

fatally on every branch of her material prosperity, injuring trade and agriculture, and, in the end, taking from the poorest and most numerous section of her people the little security against death by hunger, which Sir John Strachey had provided in the Famine Insurance Fund.

Surrounded in the early days of his Viceroyalty by enthusiastic supporters of his views, the shadow of isolation darkened Lord Lytton's last months in India. The amazing financial blunder, which had brought discredit on his Government, had tended to alienate its members from their Head; and of the men who had done most to foster in him the belief that it would be an easy thing to drive Russia back to the Oxus and rule Afghanistan through a submissive Amir, Cavagnari was dead, Colley had gone to South Africa, there to reap the fruit of the false military principles which he had preached in India, and Roberts had ceased to believe in the value of the Kuram,<sup>1</sup> and, instead of insisting on the retention of the Khyber, was advising the removal of as many troops as possible from Peshawar.<sup>2</sup> The Press, too, reflecting both in England and in India the weariness of the war which had come over the public mind, had turned against him,<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> "From a political standpoint this route possesses no marked advantages. It is, as it were, but a by-road to Kabul or Ghazni, and its possession does not place us in a position of vantage with regard to the tribes whose districts it skirts." (Memorandum by Sir Frederick Roberts, dated Kabul, 29th May, 1880, p. 66.)

<sup>2</sup> "I would go as far as to withdrawing all, or nearly all, the European troops from Peshawar, and reducing the garrison to the lowest possible strength." (Ibid. p. 69.) See, *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1.

<sup>3</sup> "The new Viceroy of India has by this time quitted the shores of Europe. . . . His arrival is expected with impatience at Calcutta. There more than any other part of the Queen's dominions, the personal influence of the representative of the Crown can make itself felt; those who have revolted against the policy of Lord Lytton, and those who have been daunted by its ill success, are ready to welcome his successor. Those who have upheld the policy which has been pursued for the past few years are disheartened by recent events, and are willing to admit that there is room, provisionally at least, for a change of attitude and conduct on the part of the Government of India." (*The Times* leader, May 21st, 1880.)

had the Beaconsfield Ministry remained in office another year, he himself would have been called upon to reverse the policy, on which he had staked his reputation as a statesman ; for, however much men in opposition may criticize decisions which seem to savour of weakness, every Government has to submit to the pressure of circumstances and to shape its course by facts, and the state of the Indian Army and the state of the Indian finances forbade that third Afghan War, which must have been faced had the resolution to keep Kandahar and Kabul apart been adhered to ; for it was as inconceivable of Abdur Rahman as of Yakub Khan that " he would abide one moment longer than he could possibly help by the terms of any agreement based on the dismemberment of his kingdom and the alienation of one of its fairest provinces."

Fortunately, Lord Lytton's successor was capable of looking at men and events from more than one standpoint ; a power which lifted him above the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, seen through which every Afghan's simplest word and action appeared magnified and distorted. It seemed so natural to Lord Ripon that Abdur Rahman should wish to gain as many adherents as possible before crossing the Hindu Kush, so natural that to commend himself to his future subjects he should appeal to their patriotic feelings, that he refused to put a hostile interpretation on the delays which had shaken Stewart's confidence in the Sirdar's sincerity, and decided that, in the absence of all distinct proof of duplicity, it would be wise and fair to give him the benefit of the doubt.<sup>1</sup> In pursuance of this decision, Griffin was instructed by telegraph to inform Abdur Rahman of the British Government's views with respect to the position which an Amir of Kabul must hold in relation to Foreign Powers ; to explain to what extent and under what circumstances he might count upon British support against external attack ; to assure him that, with

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, pp. 43, 44.



the exception of certain territories otherwise disposed of, or whose disposition was still under discussion, he was free to re-establish the authority exercised by former rulers of his family, and that there was no intention of stationing English Residents within his dominions; and, lastly, to invite him to proceed towards Kabul to lay, in person, his propositions for ulterior arrangements before the British authorities in that city.<sup>1</sup> An answer to this communication was to be demanded within four days of its delivery into Abdur Rahman's hands, and on the fifth day, with or without an answer, Stewart's messenger was to begin his return journey.

Mr. Lepel Griffin's letter embodying these instructions was received by Abdur Rahman at Khanadabad, and drew from him an immediate and friendly reply—it had crossed with a letter in which he had announced that he was on the point of starting for Kabul—but it was noticeable that, although he expressed himself satisfied with the position offered him by the British Government, he avoided direct mention of the limits set to his authority, and wrote of his having been granted "the boundaries of Afghanistan which were settled by treaty with my most noble and respected grandfather, Amir Dost Mahomed."<sup>2</sup>

The suspicions reawakened in the minds of the British negotiators by this ambiguity, were deepened by a message from a presumably trustworthy source, strongly questioning the Sirdar's good faith, and Stewart and Griffin, anxious and perplexed, were again inclined to break off the negotiations and to look elsewhere for a prince to take the Government of Kabul off their hands. The Viceroy and his Council, however, held to the course upon which they had entered, preferring the risk of some disadvantage or embarrassment to incurring, by a sudden, premature change, any possible imputation on their good faith and firmness of purpose;<sup>3</sup> and events quickly justified their

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 44, 45.

decision. Even whilst they were deliberating, the position of affairs as regarded the probabilities of a satisfactory settlement with Abdur Rahman had changed for the better. The British agent, Ressaldar Afzul Khan, who had returned to Kabul from Turkestan on the 1st of July, gave, on the whole, a favourable report of the Sirdar; and a week later, Stewart was able to write in his Diary that the news all over the country was tolerably satisfactory, and that he was making calculations for retirement, which would, be hoped, begin by that day month.<sup>1</sup>

Abdur Rahman was now drawing daily nearer, and letters from him followed each other in quick succession. On the 24th of June, he wrote defending himself against the charge of double-dealing, by pointing out that for him to command the tribes under arms to disperse to their homes, would destroy the influence that he was beginning to acquire over them.<sup>2</sup> On the 6th of July, he wrote again, this time from Khinjan, to explain that he could not come to Kabul without first consulting the people of Afghanistan; but that their consent to the settlement proposed by the British Government once obtained, there should be no further delay.<sup>3</sup> Before writing his next letter, dated July 16th, he had crossed the Hindu Kush and arrived in Kohistan, the chiefs of which province he had summoned to meet him; and he was able to promise that, when he had fulfilled his pledge to consult them, he would leave for Charikar, and either there, or at Istalif, enter into those personal negotiations desired by the British authorities.

The meeting with the Kohistani leaders took place at Tutandara, where he also received a deputation of persons friendly to British interests. Both interviews so strengthened his position that he no longer hesitated to go forward, and on the 20th, he arrived at Charikar,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 49, 50.

where he was met by a large number of chiefs and other influential men. No British officer was awaiting him there—it would have been inexpedient to send one without a strong escort, and a strong escort might have provoked hostility. Stewart and Griffin however had now decided not to wait for the discussion of the details of the anticipated agreement, but at once to acknowledge him as the successor of Yakub Khan. He had fulfilled the conditions attached by the Indian Government to such recognition; it was certain that, unless publicly recognized, he would not be permitted by his followers to enter the capital, or the British camp; and the people of Afghanistan—so weary of anarchy and of the presence of a foreign force as to be willing to accept any head whom the British Government might desire to set over them—were urgently demanding that its choice should be declared:<sup>1</sup> so, on the 22nd of July, in public durbar, Abdur Rahman was proclaimed Amir of Kabul, just in time to lighten the difficulties in which the military authorities in Northern Afghanistan were to be involved by an unforeseen disaster at Kandahar.

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 51.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### Ayub Khan's Advance on Kandahar

ELEVEN days after the departure of Sir Donald Stewart from Kandahar, Lieutenant-General J. M. Primrose, C.S.I., arrived in that city and assumed command of all troops in Southern Afghanistan, thus setting General Phayre free to return to Quetta, the point from which he could best keep a vigilant eye on the long line of communications, for the safety of which he was responsible. The force assigned to him for the protection of that line—all the troops included in it, with the exception of the Europeans manning the Heavy guns, belonging to the Bombay Native army—consisted of

- 4 Heavy Guns,
- 4 Mountain Guns,
- 4 Squadrons Cavalry,
- 7 Battalions Infantry,
- 3 Companies of Sappers and Miners,

and was distributed as follows :—

In the Pishin Valley, the entrenched posts Abdulla Khan-ke-Killa, Gulistan, and Kushdil Khan-ke-Killa were strongly occupied; Quetta was garrisoned by a heavy battery, two and a half battalions of Infantry, and a detachment of Cavalry; a regiment of Infantry and a detachment of Cavalry were stationed at Gwal, the point where the Harnai Railway debouched into Pishin, with an outpost of half a battalion at Kach-Amadan; two and a half squadrons of Cavalry, ten and a half companies of Infantry, and the three companies of

Sappers and Miners were detailed to protect the line and help in its construction; whilst two Mountain guns and six companies of Infantry were assigned to Thal, a strategical point occupied by Sandeman as soon as it had been decided to carry the line from Sukkur to Quetta, *viâ* Sibi and Gwal. Small posts were also maintained at the different encamping grounds in the Bolan to protect the Government stores, which had not been removed when the road through the Pass was closed on account of the heat, the two thousand carts employed on it being parked at Quetta and Mach, and the bullocks belonging to them sent out to graze; Sibi was held by detachments of Cavalry and Infantry from Jacobabad, and troops from Kandahar garrisoned the three principal posts between that city and the foot of the Khojak Pass—small detachments at Mundi Hissar and Abdul Rahman, and two Mountain guns, three companies of Infantry, and forty sabres at Chaman—the defence of the intermediate posts of Mel Karez, Dabrai, and Gatai being entrusted to local levies.

✓ Distributed over many hundred miles of rugged country, inhabited by a hostile people, General Phayre's Division barely sufficed for the discharge of its legitimate duties, and could not be counted on for effectual aid should the garrison of Kandahar find itself in difficulties; and from the first there were signs that, at no distant date, difficulties of a serious kind might have to be faced.

In the Arghastan Valley several bodies of tribesmen were dispersed early in April by Sher Ali, now the acknowledged Wali of Kandahar; but, on the night of the 6th, two or three hundred men led by Ghazis, attacked Dabrai, and the Road Commandant, Major S. J. Waudby, who, with an escort of five men, had put up there for the night, abandoned by the Pathan levies, perished after desperate fighting, in which he is said to have killed a number of the enemy with a hog-spear. One man of his escort escaped to carry the news to the nearest British post, and another, left for dead, recovered to confirm his tale. The victors cut the telegraph wires, and for a few days all



communication was suspended between Kandahar and Quetta. A punitive column from Chaman, consisting of two Mountain guns, sixty sabres, and a hundred and seventy rifles, reinforced by two hundred and fifty Cavalry and a hundred and fifty Infantry of Sher Ali's contingent, destroyed a fort belonging to Abu Sayud, a chief who was known to have been implicated in the outrage. Abu Sayud himself was captured and sent to Kandahar to be dealt with by the Wali, and thenceforward Mel Karez, Dabrai, and Gatai were garrisoned by regular troops.

Throughout April, communication between Kandahar and Khelat-i-Ghilzai was much hampered by gatherings of tribesmen ; and, at the end of the month, one of these bodies strengthened by four hundred Ghazis, completely closed the road, after plundering a Commissariat convoy near Jaldak. To reopen it, Colonel Tanner, with two hundred and fifty men of the 2nd Baluchi regiment, issued from Khelat-i-Ghilzai during the night of the 1st of May, surprised the marauders' villages ; seized two headmen and several of the principal inhabitants as hostages ; recovered some of the stolen camels ; drove off a number of the villagers' sheep and goats ; and, on his way home, defeated a strong body of Ghazis who attempted to stop him, killing their leader and fourteen men and taking eight prisoners.

The same day Sir Robert Sandeman moved out of Quetta, with two guns and seven hundred rifles, to punish the Panizai Pathans for the murder of Captain H. F. Showers, who had been waylaid and killed near the Khojak Pass.<sup>1</sup> The weather was hot and the marching heavy ; but, except that stones were rolled down upon the baggage as it passed through a ravine, the offending tribe offered no resistance, and on making its submission, the column returned to Cantonments, after blowing up the village towers of Dirgai.

<sup>1</sup> Three days after the murder of Showers the same tribe attacked a survey party under Lieutenant C. F. Fuller, wounding an English Sergeant and two men of the escort. (*Life of Sir Robert Sandeman*, p. 144.)

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On the 9th of May, three officers—Captain A. J. Garrett, Captain F. W. Leckie, and Lieutenant E. E. M. Lawford—returning with a small escort from Kokeran, were fired on within a short distance of Kandahar. The shots wounded Garrett and a trooper, and all efforts to discover the perpetrators of the outrage proved vain.

Each of these incidents was a small thing in itself, and many such might have continued to occur without sensibly endangering the safety of the British garrison in Southern Afghanistan, if, behind these sporadic outbursts of tribal animosity, had not lain the constant and ever-growing menace of the large and well-equipped army of Ayub Khan, whose movements were beginning to emerge from the cloud of contradictory rumours by which they had been concealed, and to take definite direction and form. On the 24th of May, Sher Ali learned that the Barakzai Prince, having at last succeeded in reconciling the Kabuli and Herati sections of his army and their respective leaders—Luinab Kushdil Khan, son of Shahgassi Sherdil Khan, and Sirdar Abdulla Khan—had fixed the 10th of June for the beginning of his march on Kandahar; that he was in correspondence with the Zemin-dawari chiefs; and that the people of Farah had been ordered by Sirdar Umar Khan to cut their crops, ready for the use of the troops that would soon be passing through the district.

In the hope of counteracting Ayub Khan's influence in the Zemin-dawar district, Sher Ali started for Girishk on the 1st of June; but, so little confidence had he in the fidelity or the efficiency of his contingent, that he begged Colonel St. John, who had been appointed Resident at Kandahar, to give him the support of a British Brigade. The request was referred to Sir Frederick Haines, who declined to grant it, declaring emphatically that the garrison of Kandahar needed augmenting, not diminishing, and strongly recommending that the Bombay Reserve Division should be mobilized as soon as Ayub Khan's intentions had been ascertained.

On the 21st of June came the news that the advance guard of Ayub

Khan's army—fourteen hundred picked horsemen led by Kushdil Khan—had crossed the Hari-rud, and Primrose, yielding to St. John's earnest representations, reported to Head-Quarters that, pending reference and orders, he had arranged to despatch a Brigade of Infantry, a battery of Horse Artillery, and a regiment of Native Cavalry to the Helmand, and to strengthen his own position by moving up a regiment from Quetta and drawing in a wing of the 2nd Baluchis from Khelat-i-Ghilzai. In reply, the Quartermaster-General telegraphed permission to mobilize a Brigade, but forbade any actual advance till the orders of the Commander-in-Chief had been received.

There can be no doubt that if the decision had lain with Sir Frederick Haines, there would have been no expedition to the Helmand; for nothing in the position of affairs in Southern Afghanistan had changed since he had refused Sher Ali's request for British aid. But above the Commander-in-Chief stood the Viceroy and his Council; and the Viceroy and his Council, convinced that it would be inconsistent with the security of the military position at Kandahar to allow Ayub Khan to cross the Helmand, applied to the Secretary of State, on the 27th of June, for permission to direct Primrose to despatch a force strong enough to prevent the passage of that river; and the Secretary of State gave the sanction asked for without inquiring what the strength of such a force should be, nor from what source it could safely be drawn.<sup>1</sup> Strange to say, no one, not even Sir F. Haines, seems ever to have asked the first of these two questions. In a memorandum, dated June 30th, the Commander-in-Chief dwelt on the danger of withdrawing troops from Kandahar, whose garrison only numbered four thousand six hundred and sixty-five men and one hundred and four officers,<sup>2</sup> and the still greater risk to which Khelat-i-Ghilzai—eighty miles from all support—would be exposed by the recall of a wing of the Baluchi regiment; he showed too the impossibility of taking

<sup>1</sup> Telegrams Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> These figures include non-effective, sick, etc.

troops from the line of communications without leaving the railway and the new road unprotected till regiments from the Reserve Division could be pushed up to relieve them ; but he failed to call the Government's attention to the absurdity of supposing that any force that Primrose might put into the field could keep Ayub Khan from crossing the Helmand and moving, at his choice, on Ghazni or Kandahar, though he was warned by a staff-officer who had marched with Bidulph to Girishk and carefully noted all the features of the country, of the certain consequences of sending two or three thousand men, encumbered by baggage and commissariat trains, to check the advance of an army eight or ten times its own size, at a point where, if defeated or outmanœuvred, its only line of retreat would lie through many miles of waterless desert. It is probable, however, that if Sir Frederick Haines had added this to his other objections to Primrose's scheme, it would have done as little as they to alter the Government's determination to accept it ; for all he gained by his strongly worded representations was leave to order the mobilization of a British Infantry regiment, two Native Infantry regiments, a battery of Artillery, and a regiment of Native Cavalry, belonging to the Reserve Division.

Orders to despatch a Brigade to Girishk were sent to Primrose, on the 1st of July, and in transmitting them the Quartermaster-General again put on record the Commander-in-Chief's disapproval of the movement, and directed that on no account was the Helmand to be crossed,<sup>1</sup> or Kandahar strengthened at Khelat-i-Ghilzai's expense.

The Force which started for the Helmand on the 4th of July, commanded by Brigadier-General G. R. S. Burrows and accompanied by Colonel St. John, consisted of

#### STAFF.

Captain W. H. McMath, Brigade-Major.

Captain T. Harris, Deputy Assistant-Quartermaster-General.

Captain J. R. Slade, Orderly Officer.

<sup>1</sup> This was in accordance with the orders of Government.—H. B. H.

Lieutenant G. C. Dobbs, Deputy Assistant Commissary-General.  
Major E. P. Leach, V.C., Royal Engineers.

## CAVALRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General T. Nuttall, Commanding.  
Major G. C. Hogg, Brigade-Major.  
E-B Royal Horse Artillery, Major G. F. Blackwood.  
3rd Sind Horse, Colonel J. H. P. Malcolmson.  
3rd Bombay Light Cavalry, Major A. P. Currie.

## INFANTRY BRIGADE.

6 Companies 66th Foot, Colonel J. Galbraith.  
1st Grenadiers (Bombay Infantry), Lieutenant-Colonel H. S. Anderson.  
Jacob's Rifles (30th Bombay Infantry), Colonel W. G. Mainwaring.  
Half-Company No. 2 Bombay Sappers and Miners, Lieutenant T. R. Henn.

Strength—6 guns, 2,453 officers and men, leaving only—

4 Guns C-2 Royal Artillery,  
4 Heavy Guns,  
2 Mortars,

1 Squadron Poona Horse, with some details of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry and  
3rd Sind Horse,

7th Fusiliers—about 550 effectives } 850 Rifles,  
1 Wing 19th Bombay Infantry—300 }

to protect the citadel of Kandahar and the big cantonments outside the city walls.

The Commanding Royal Engineer, Lieutenant-Colonel John Hills, protested strongly against this dangerous reduction of strength. "We are left," so he wrote to Primrose, "the remnants of the garrison of Kandahar, in a very awkward position—twenty-five here and there—and were an attack made on camp as held at present, serious consequences would result." Primrose admitted that the garrison left was very weak, but the 4th Native Bombay Infantry, followed by the 28th, was moving up the line, and he trusted that the knowledge of their approach and that other troops were on the move, would prevent any disturbance of the ordinary state of affairs in and around the city.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Bombay Field Force*, 1880, p. 14, by Major-General Sir John Hills, R.E., K.C.B.



A number of unpleasant pieces of intelligence which soon reached Simla, proved how ill-founded was Primrose's trust in the tranquillizing effect on the country generally, of the knowledge that other troops were on the way. Telegraphic communication had been interrupted near Tukht-i-Pul; four hundred of the Khan of Khelat's troops had deserted; the Mari and Pathan tribes were giving a great deal of trouble; Surgeon J. B. Eaton and Lieutenant H. W. Seymour had been attacked on the Harnai road, Seymour receiving two wounds and Eaton having his horse killed under him; and tribesmen under Mahomed Aslam were again assembling in the neighbourhood of Khelat-i-Ghilzai. The breaching of three miles of the Sukkur-Sibi railway by heavy floods was the work of nature, not of man; but the accident, by retarding the movement of reinforcements, unfavourably affected the situation at Kandahar.

Preceded by the cavalry and the Sappers, Burrows marched by the route taken the previous year by Biddulph, and on the 11th of July reached the Helmand, where he took up a position opposite Girishk and the Wali's camp on the river's further bank, and was met by the news that Ayub Khan's main body was at Farah and his advanced guard at Washir. Two days later, St. John ascertained that the Kandahar Contingent, consisting of two thousand Infantry, a thousand Cavalry, and a battery of smooth-bore guns, was quite untrustworthy, and after consultation with Sher Ali and Burrows, settled that it should be brought across the river and disarmed by the British troops;<sup>1</sup> but next morning, before this could be done, the Infantry broke out into open mutiny, seized the baggage, guns, and ammunition, plundered the fort where supplies for the British had been collected, drove the Wali and the cavalry that remained faithful to

<sup>1</sup> "Rode across the river and met the Wali, who returned with me to our camp. . . . General Burrows came to my tent, and joined the conversation, and after some time it was agreed on the Wali's proposition that he should bring his troops to our side, where it would be easy to disarm them."—Extract from Colonel St. John's Diary of 13th July. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 144.

him, across the Helmand, and started off to join Ayub Khan. So essential was it to disperse the deserters, or, at least, to recover the guns and ammunition, that Burrows felt justified in disobeying the Government's orders to remain on the Kandahar side of the river, and ordered the Horse Artillery and Cavalry, four companies of the 66th Foot, two of Jacob's Rifles, and the Sappers and Miners, in pursuit. Once across the river, the Cavalry outstripped the Artillery, which was delayed by two or three awkward watercourses;<sup>1</sup> but the ground was too difficult to allow of overtaking the main body of the fugitives, and only a small portion of the abandoned baggage could be secured.<sup>2</sup> The Afghan guns fired a few ineffective rounds, but the drivers fled after three of their number had been killed, and with great difficulty, owing to the lack of horses and harness, Major Blackwood, commanding the British Battery, got them safely across the stream.<sup>3</sup> The whole force was back in camp by 8 p.m., after a hard day's work,<sup>4</sup> in which it had lost one man of the 66th Foot killed, two wounded, and had killed forty or fifty of the mutineers.

Early that morning the British camp had been moved to a better position, two miles higher up the river; but, in the course of the day, information had been brought in that Ayub Khan was only three marches from the Helmand, which he was intending to cross to

<sup>1</sup> "The Cavalry advanced quicker than I could, for I had two or three infernal watercourses to negotiate." (Extract from a letter of Major Blackwood's, dated Camp Kushk-i-Nakhud, July 18th, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> "The Cavalry pursued, but the ground was not favourable. However, they came up with plenty of abandoned camels and baggage, and if time had only permitted, might have secured ten times more than they did." (Ibid.)

<sup>3</sup> "It was 2 p.m. now, and we had to make our way home and also drag six more guns and three wagons. The brutal enemy had cut and stripped their harness and left only two horses, so I had to improvise teams and harness, the infantry having to hold up the shafts of the carriages, whilst four leaders dragged, as I was stumped for wheeled harness." (Ibid.)

<sup>4</sup> "A long day's work and no food, for I'm shot if we had more than a crust of bread from dawn till dark. Thirst was a caution. The heat was lively, but the excitement of the game made you feel it little." (Ibid.)

the north of Girishk, and though the Brigade had been sent out for the express purpose of disputing the passage of that river, Burrows now decided to withdraw from its banks. Had the Helmand been fordable only at a single point, careful dispositions might have frustrated the enemy's design; but at the end of July it was fordable all along its course, and the British column, even without the mutiny of the Wali's contingent, was too small to admit of dispersion, and too heavily weighted to hurry from point to point in anticipation of the enemy's movements. Apart, however, from the unfavourable military aspect of the situation, the loss of a large part of the supplies stored at Girishk rendered imperative the abandonment of a district where none were procurable; so Burrows called together his principal officers to consider with him the direction and extent of the change which must now be made. At this council Colonel Malcolmson and Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson were in favour of marching the force straight back to Kandahar—the Wali had already given the same advice—St. John was eager to move it twelve miles higher up the river in order to forestall Ayub Khan in the command of the fords at Hyderabad; and, in the end, Burrows decided on the middle course of retiring to Kushk-i-Nakhud, where he counted on being able to feed his troops with supplies drawn from the Garmab and Maiwand Valleys.<sup>1</sup> This decision was submitted to the Commander-in-Chief, who, in sanctioning it, warned both Primrose and Burrows that the latter, being so far from support, must act with caution.

Meanwhile affairs on the line of communication with India were not improving. Another breach in the railway had so disorganized traffic by the new road that troops were being pushed up in carts through the Bolan; and Sir R. Sandeman reported that Mullahs of

<sup>1</sup> "Rode to Maiwand with Major Leach, R.E., and a squadron of cavalry, found everything quiet and arranged for supply of atta from the mills, of which there are eight."—St. John's Diary of 18th of July. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 146.

influence were preaching jihad, and that the movement in Ayub's favour was more extended and determined than was believed in Kandahar. Whatever delusions the British garrison of Kandahar may have entertained on this point, were evidently not shared by its Native population, for families whose heads had reason to fear Ayub Khan's resentment, were leaving it daily. Primrose mounted three forty-pounders on the walls of the citadel and caused the city to be constantly patrolled, yet outrages were of frequent occurrence; and had a capable leader presented himself at this juncture, the armed men with whom the streets were swarming, could have captured the citadel with its wealth of military stores, and those once in their hands, the destruction first of the four hundred Europeans holding the cantonment and then of Burrows's Brigade must have followed in due course.<sup>1</sup> This, at least, was the opinion of the Commanding Engineer, and when it is remembered that, for ten days, eight hundred and fifty bayonets represented the effective strength of the garrison, and that a wing of the Bombay Rifles was the only reinforcement which reached it during another ten days, that opinion cannot be regarded as unduly alarmist.

Burrows arrived at Kushk-i-Nakhud on the 17th of July, and, on the 19th, shifted his camp three miles nearer the Helmand.<sup>2</sup> The new site lay half-way between the Argandab and the hills which formed the northern boundary of the Kushk-i-Nakhud plain; but, from it, no adequate watch could be kept on the enemy, for though one road from Hyderabad to Maiwand, the important strategic point which was certain to be Ayub Khan's objective, could be observed from a low plateau lying three and a half miles west of the British camp, another, running through the hills, long and rugged, indeed, but practicable for cavalry, was entirely screened from view. Nor

<sup>1</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, 1880, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> "Moved camp to an open position some three miles nearer Girishk."  
—St. John's Diary of the 19th of July. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 146.

was the camp better situated for defence in the event of the enemy's turning aside to attack it; for, on every side, the undulatory conformation of the ground offered hollows in which bodies of men could gather unperceived, and this billowy plain was cut up by Karezes and drainage lines, divided by low walls, and dotted over by deserted houses, all affording excellent cover to an assailant. As the position was useless for the protection of Kandahar, in case Ayub Khan should move straight on that city *viâ* Maiwand, the only possible explanation of Burrows remaining in it is, that St. John, on whom he depended for information, deceived by reports of discontent and dissensions rife among Ayub Khan's troops, had led him to believe that they would not prove formidable foes. There was no doubt, however, as to the Afghans being strong in Artillery, so the four six-pounder smooth-bore guns and the two howitzers recovered from the mutineers, were manned by a detachment of the 66th, under Lieutenant G. de la M. Faunce, which had gone through a course of gun-drill; horses and harness were sent out by forced marches from Kandahar, and the command of the improvised battery, to which Lieutenants T. F. T. Fowle and G. S. Jones were attached, was conferred by Burrows on his Orderly Officer, Captain J. R. Slade, R.H.A.<sup>1</sup> Neither could there be any doubts as to the disturbed state of the country, for a commissariat convoy, commanded by Captain P. C. Heath and escorted by a hundred and thirty men of the 30th Bombay Infantry which arrived at Kushk-i-Nakhud on, or about, the 20th of July, had been so seriously threatened by large bodies of villagers that Burrows, though anxious to rid himself of his sick, and of his superfluous baggage, dared not entrust it to so weak a guard, and had to wait for the coming of a second provision convoy, which was to be escorted by two companies of the 4th Bombay Infantry, and to bring with it carriage for the removal of the former.

<sup>1</sup> Telegram from General Primrose dated 21st July. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 17.



On the 21st of July, the Commander-in-Chief, by desire of the Government, asked General Primrose for information as to the suitability of Burrows's position for taking the offensive, "as it was of the utmost importance that Ayub Khan should not be allowed to slip past Kandahar towards Ghazni without being attacked."<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederick also inquired into Primrose's own views and intentions, and desired to know to what extent he could strengthen Burrows as reinforcements arrived at Kandahar. Primrose replied that Burrows was prepared to attack the enemy should he advance on Kushk-i-Nakhud, or on Maiwand by the direct road, and that should he attempt to reach the latter place *via* the Malmund Pass, he would intercept him in the Garmab Valley. In the latter case, he would send back his sick and his superfluous baggage to Kandahar, and Primrose promised to do all in his power to lighten the column and add to its mobility. On receipt of this information, the Commander-in-Chief telegraphed authorizing Burrows to attack Ayub Khan, if he considered himself strong enough to do so.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst these telegrams were being exchanged by the Commander-in-Chief and Primrose, the General with whose movements they were concerned, had been startled into the belief that he was more likely to be the attacked than the attacker. News had been brought to Colonel St. John that, on the 21st, Ayub Khan and half his army had reached the Helmand, where he had been joined by Sher Ali's mutinous infantry, and by a number of mounted tribesmen and Ghazis; that his whole force, numbering four thousand cavalry, four thousand infantry, and eight thousand Ghazis, was moving on Sangbur, an oasis in the desert, twelve miles north-west of Burrows's

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram dated Simla, 22nd July, from Commander-in-Chief to General Primrose: "You will understand that you have full liberty to attack Ayub, if you consider you are strong enough to do so. Government consider it of the greatest political importance that his force should be dispersed, and prevented by all possible means from passing on to Ghazni." (*Ibid.* p. 97.)

position ; and that from Sangbur he intended to attack the British camp, in conjunction with two thousand five hundred cavalry, under Kushdil Khan, who were already on their way down the Helmand, with instructions to move up the Argandab Valley.

Alarmed by these rumours, Burrows again called a council of war at which Brigadier-General Nuttall, Colonel Malcolmson, Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson, and Major Currie were unanimously in favour of retiring towards Kandahar, whilst St. John and the Staff advocated showing the enemy a bold front. The upshot was that the Force moved a few hundred yards to a point where two walled enclosures offered protection to the baggage and sick.<sup>1</sup> The ground between the enclosures, fenced in by pack-saddles and rope entanglement, was allotted to the transport camels ; to the east of the enclosure the cavalry lines were established ; then came the officers' tents, and, beyond these, the infantry in a semi-circle, with guns at intervals, protected by a breastwork of tents and packs.<sup>2</sup> There was no shade, and all day long the sun shone like a ball of fire through the clouds of dust that obscured the sky.

On the 22nd, St. John's spies reported that Ayub Khan had crossed the Helmand, that his cavalry, after reconnoitring as far as Sangbur where he had established an infantry outpost, had gone back to the river, and that it was to return on the morrow, followed the next day by the main body of the army. To test the truth of these reports, Burrows, early on the morning of the 23rd, sent out a troop of the 3rd Sind Horse, under Lieutenant A. M. Monteith, to reconnoitre towards Sangbur, and, at the same time, despatched a squadron of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant

<sup>1</sup> " Being apprehensive of a night attack by the enemy's numerous cavalry, General Burrows has shifted his camp to a new position, in which the stores, sick, and baggage animals are in an enclosure." (Telegram 23rd July, from Colonel St. John to Foreign Secretary, Simla. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, pp. 19, 20.)

<sup>2</sup> St. John's Diary, 21st of July, 1880. *Ibid.* p. 147.

T. P. Geoghegan and accompanied by Major E. P. Leach, to visit the Maiwand Valley and burn all the newly stacked corn. Three miles from camp, Monteith's troop came into touch with five or six hundred Afghan horsemen and had to fall back. Hearing carbine fire, Leach and Geoghegan abandoned their expedition and hurried to the assistance of their comrades,<sup>1</sup> whom they found about a mile from camp watching the enemy moving leisurely, in a long straggling line, in the direction of Maiwand. Soon two squadrons of Cavalry and a division of the Horse Artillery came galloping up, sent off by Burrows as soon as he had been apprised of the state of affairs in his front; but they arrived too late to do more than throw a few shells into the Afghan rear-guard as it disappeared from sight.

Another day passed without bringing any definite news of Ayub's movements. There were reports in abundance, but neither St. John's spies nor Burrows's patrols could be relied on for information: the former might, or might not, be playing their employer false; the latter, mounted on half-starved, overworked beasts, could not penetrate the thick screen of skilfully handled horsemen that masked the Afghan advance.<sup>2</sup> Still, out of these conflicting reports two facts emerged: the one, that the Afghan army was many times larger than the British Brigade; the other, that by one of two routes, it was moving on Maiwand, the point which commanded the shorter road to Kandahar—thirty miles as against the forty-five, which lay between Kushk-i-Nakhud and that city. To anticipate Ayub Khan in the occupation of Maiwand was of vital importance to a force so greatly outnumbered that its Commander could not leave the possi-

<sup>1</sup> "In consequence of the affair in the morning, the expedition to burn the stacks at Maiwand did not start; but one of the Wali's sowars sent there reported none of the enemy to be seen." (St. John's Diary, 23rd July. Ibid. p. 148.)

<sup>2</sup> In whatever direction Burrows's patrols were sent out "there they were sure to meet some of those marvellous horsemen, whose ubiquity astounded our reconnoitring parties." (*Personal Records of the Kandahar Campaign*, by Major Ashe, p. 69.)

bility of a retreat out of his calculations ; yet, for three more days, Burrows stood fast, waiting apparently for more exact intelligence.

On the 25th, a detachment of the Sind Horse found Sangbur unoccupied, but was chased on its way back to camp by a body of cavalry who issued suddenly from a ravine, and, though the patrol had a good start, succeeded in overtaking it and cutting down two men. The next day, Lieutenant E. D. N. Smith discovered Afghan Cavalry at Sangbur, but his report as to their numbers—some three hundred as far as he could judge—confirmed Burrows and St. John in the belief, based on information brought in by a spy from Hyderabad,<sup>1</sup> that the whole Afghan army was still on the Helmand. In reality Ayub Khan, after crossing the river and making the demonstration towards Kushk-i-Nakhud which had compelled Burrows to shift his camp, had sent off a large body of cavalry and Ghazis to Maiwand by the difficult, circuitous mountain road, and on the 26th, marched himself, with his powerful artillery and main body, to Sangbur, where he arrived soon after the place had been reconnoitred by Lieutenant Smith. Later in the day, when a party of the Wali's cavalry, sent out to collect supplies, reported the presence of the enemy in the Maiwand Valley, Burrows jumped to the conclusion that the horsemen seen by the foraging party was the enemy's advanced guard, that it had come over the Malmand Pass, and that the whole Afghan force was marching by that route. Even on this theory of Ayub Khan's strategy, the news was so serious that Burrows again called a council of war, at which it was decided that the Brigade should march early the next morning to Maiwand<sup>2</sup> with a view to securing its own communications with Kandahar, interposing between that city and the enemy, and, at the same time, closing the Khakrez Valley, through which Ayub Khan might be intending to make his way to Ghazni.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John's Diary. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, Leach, and Slade wanted Burrows to move that night.—H. B. H.

<sup>3</sup> St. John's Diary of 26th of July. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 149.

Satisfied that he had read the Afghan leader's plans aright, Burrows made no attempt to ascertain whether any change had occurred at Sangbur—he had even called in the cavalry patrols on the western plateau from which, if haze did not hinder, the advance of the Afghans might have been detected—and the Brigade spent its last night at Kushk-i-Nakhud in ignorance of the fact that Ayub Khan and his army were within twelve miles of its camp, ready to intercept it on the morrow.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. When the question of despatching a force to the Helmand was under discussion, Major F. J. S. Adam, Assistant-Quartermaster-General, pressed upon General Primrose the advisability of abandoning Khelat-i-Ghilzai and withdrawing its garrison to Kandahar. Primrose shared Adam's views, yet allowed himself to be drawn into supporting St. John's proposal for the retention of the place and the recall of a wing of the Baluchi regiment, a compromise which would have dangerously weakened the smaller force without appreciably adding to the strength of the larger.<sup>1</sup> Sir Donald Stewart and General Phayre, consulted on the point, agreed that Khelat should not be permanently retained; but, whereas the former was in favour of holding it till the retirement from Northern Afghanistan had been accomplished, the latter wrote that "from the moment of Sir Donald's victory at Ghazni and onward movement to Kabul, the necessity of holding Khelat as an outpost in that direction ceased in a military point of view, inasmuch as we (the Commanders in Southern Afghanistan) have no fear from that quarter. Whether there are political reasons for holding the place, or not, I cannot say, but strategically

<sup>1</sup> "On military grounds, I was always of opinion that the Khelat garrison should be withdrawn and concentrated at Kandahar, but the Political Resident urged the absolute necessity of retaining the garrison there for political reasons, consenting to the half-battalion of Baluchis being withdrawn." (Extract from Primrose's letter of the 10th of September to the Quartermaster-General.)



there are none, and I think, just as we evacuated Girishk a year ago, when we abandoned all idea of going to Herat, so should we now give up Khelat-i-Ghilzai, and save valuable troops and treasure."

There can be no doubt that Phayre was right, and it is satisfactory to find that there was one British General who shared Napoleon's opinion that "the mania of attempting, in a moment of difficulty, to hold every point, may be productive of great misfortunes"; and who was not afraid to let it be seen that he thought military security should take precedence of political aims.

OBSERVATION II. The veto on passing the Helmand was intended to prevent Burrows taking up a position on the further side of that river, or allowing himself to be drawn to that side, whilst engaged in opposing Ayub Khan's attempt to force a passage; it had no reference to such an emergency as arose when the Wali's contingent mutinied, and Burrows was justified in disregarding it for an object of such vital importance as the dispersal of the mutineers, and the recovery of the cannon they were carrying off.

OBSERVATION III. The defection of the Wali's contingent, and the loss of stores which it entailed, were the immediate causes of the withdrawal from the Helmand. If there had been no mutiny, Burrows must still have abandoned a position that was dangerous to his own force and inoperative so far as regarded any influence it could exercise on the enemy's movements; but as nothing was gained, in either of these respects, by falling back upon Kushk-i-Nakhud, it is clear that he should either have retired direct to Kandahar—a movement in which Primrose could have assisted by occupying Kokeran and establishing a strong observation post at Singiri—or else he should have marched to Maiwand, where, in the midst of fairly good local supplies, he would have been fifteen miles nearer to his base than at Kushk-i-Nakhud. To argue that by taking this latter course he

would have left the river route open to Ayub Khan, would be fallacious, for with the shorter road to Kandahar at his back, he could always have been the first to reach that city. The real objections to halting at Maiwand are to be found—partly in the precarious position of the Kandahar garrison, and partly in the fact that, as Burrows's Force was too weak to arrest Ayub Khan's advance should Ghazni be his objective, and must fall back in haste if the Afghan Commander were aiming at the capture of Kandahar, there was nothing to be gained by its taking up a position from which it could not assume the offensive, and which it might have to abandon at any moment. If Burrows had obeyed Napoleon's precept and "asked himself frequently in the day what should I do if the enemy's army appeared now in my front, or on my right, or on my left?" he would not have lingered at Kushki-Nakhud, for "the difficulty he would have had in answering these questions" would have shown him that he was "ill posted," and compelled him "to seek to remedy it."

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### Battle of Maiwand

THE march to Maiwand began under bad conditions :—soldiers and followers, after a night spent in “ the weary process of unravelling the closely packed camp,”<sup>1</sup> tired and jaded ; the baggage animals stiff with inaction ; the cavalry horses worn out with incessant patrolling ; and the column, encumbered by stores and baggage, entirely devoid of mobility.<sup>2</sup>

At dawn a picket of fifty men of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry, under Lieutenant T. P. Geoghegan, moved out towards Maiwand, and fifty men of the 3rd Sind Horse, under Lieutenant A. M. Monteith, took up a position on a low ridge about three miles to the north of camp ; but though the rouse sounded at 4 a.m., it was nearly seven o'clock before the main body of the Brigade got into motion. Preceded by Geoghegan's picket as a reconnoitring party, it moved with the usual military precautions in the following order :—

An advanced guard of Cavalry and Artillery, commanded by Brigadier-General Nuttall ; the Infantry in line of columns at deploying distances, under Burrows's personal command ; a rear-guard of artillery, cavalry, and infantry, under Colonel Malcolmson, with the 3,000 baggage animals massed on their right, Monteith's observation

<sup>1</sup> Letter of *Times*' Correspondent, dated Kandahar, September 8. (*The Times*, October 16th, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> “ Encumbered by an enormous quantity of ordnance and commissariat stores and baggage.” (Brigadier-General G. R. S. Burrows's Despatch, dated Kandahar, 30th August, 1880.)

post becoming the left flanking party, whilst a detachment of the 3rd Sind Horse, under Lieutenant E. D. N. Smith, guarded the Brigade's right flank. Sher Ali's cavalry were with the rear-guard, but as many of the men had gone back to Kandahar when the Brigade moved to Kushk-i-Nakhud, and others had since slipped away, it is probable that, by the 27th, the Wali had with him only a small personal escort.

The thick haze which enshrouded the country, and made it difficult to distinguish even objects fairly near at hand, increased, rather than diminished, the fierce heat of the sun; the loose soil burned under foot, and rose in suffocating clouds under the churning of the artillery wheels and the tread of thousands of men and beasts.

For the first six miles there were no signs of the presence of an enemy; then Geoghegan reported that shots had been heard in the direction of Maiwand, and that small groups of horsemen were moving diagonally across his front. Orders were at once issued to proceed cautiously; but, dominated by the belief that Maiwand was occupied by a small advanced guard of an army marching by the Malmand Pass, neither Burrows nor Nuttall suspected that the cavalry observed by Geoghegan were Ayub Khan's flankers moving outside the hills behind which his main body was marching.

It was midway between the villages of Mushak and Karez Ak, where the troops halted from 9 to 10 a.m. to water the horses and to allow the straggling baggage animals to lock up, that the real state of things burst upon the British Commander. First, one of St. John's spies came hurrying in with the news that Ayub Khan had arrived the previous day at Sangbur, and was now marching with his whole force on Maiwand;<sup>1</sup> and shortly after Major G. C. Hogg, who had been reconnoitring well ahead of Geoghegan's scouts, rode back to report that

<sup>1</sup> "From 9 to 10 a.m. a halt was made near a large village, at which time a spy came up with the intelligence that Ayub Khan arrived yesterday with his whole force at Sangbur and was now on his way to Maiwand."—St. John's Diary, 27th July. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 149.

he had discovered large bodies of cavalry moving in a northerly direction. The haze and the conformation of the ground had prevented his ascertaining whether they were accompanied by guns and infantry ;<sup>1</sup> but Burrows, with the spy's intelligence before him, recognized that he had been outmanœuvred, and that the valley from which he drew his supplies, and, what was even more important, that the direct road to Kandahar, was already in the hands of the enemy. Thenceforward, his only line of retreat was the road that lay behind him, and every mile of advance meant a mile further from Kandahar and the help that might come to him from thence ; and, yet, convinced that it was too late to go back, he decided to go forward and gave the order to continue the march.

At 10.30 the advanced guard arrived at Mahmudabad,<sup>2</sup> a hamlet surrounded by walled gardens, from which, three miles to the north-east, the small fortified village of Maiwand could be dimly descried through the haze. Three-quarters of a mile away on the right front, embedded in orchards, stood the village of Khig, between which and Mahmudabad lay a well-filled watercourse. To the left, a deep ravine skirted the road, and, beyond this, a plain, four miles broad, stretched away to the hills, through an opening in which, with field glasses, the trees and villages of the Garmab Valley were just discernible.

On arriving at Mahmudabad, General Nuttall and Major Blackwood, who was in command of the artillery attached to the advanced guard, rode forward with two of its four guns to get a better view of Maiwand, whilst Lieutenant H. Maclaine crossed the ravine with the two other guns, and discovering a large body of Afghan horse

<sup>1</sup> The extraordinary deceptive nature of the haze may be gathered from the fact that General Burrows and his Staff believed that the dark lines in front of them were motionless trees, not moving men ; only Leach, who had surveyed the district, at once recognized the truth.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes written Mundabad.—H. B. H.



well to the south of the hills, galloped out to his left front, escorted by Monteith's flanking party, and came into action about 11.30 o'clock against the enemy's exposed flank.

Scarcely had he opened fire than great masses of men began debouching into the plain, whilst hundreds of horsemen and white-robed Ghazis could be seen streaming out of Maiwand. Nuttall and Blackwood, who had returned from their reconnaissance, now followed Maclaine, who was ordered to fall back to the left of the latter's guns, which, with the remainder of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry, had taken up a position about a thousand yards in front of the ravine.<sup>1</sup> A messenger hurried off to ask that the Battery division with the rear-guard might be sent to the front, but, meantime, the horsemen observed by Maclaine moved north to join their friends issuing from the hills, and Blackwood, following them up, found himself confronted by "countless numbers,"<sup>2</sup> and he and every man with him knew that the Brigade was face to face with the whole of Ayub Khan's army and hopelessly outmatched, since, deducting the sick and the men on rear-guard duty,<sup>3</sup> Burrows could bring into the fighting line only twelve guns, fifty British officers, sixteen hundred and thirty-six bayonets, and four hundred and sixty-nine cavalry; whilst opposed to him were thirty guns, including an Armstrong Battery of superior range and weight to any on the British side, five thousand nine hundred infantry, and four thousand one hundred cavalry, supplemented by every man capable of marching and fighting from

<sup>1</sup> Major Leach always maintained that Maclaine was right in advancing as he ran no risk. He should, in his opinion, have been supported, not recalled, as he might have prevented the Afghans deploying if allowed to remain. His reasoning is unquestionably sound.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Brigadier-General Nuttall's Despatch, dated Kandahar, 3rd August, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> Sick, 84; on rear-guard duty 96 Cavalry and 209 Infantry—total 389.—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> A thousand more horsemen, who had probably been on rear-guard, joined Ayub Khan just as the battle was over. (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 19.)

Zemindawar, Farah, Bakwa, Gurmse, Kakrez, Argandab, and the city of Kandahar, most of them Ghazis, ready to die for religion and country, more formidable therefore than any troops. Burrows estimated the strength of these irregulars at fifteen thousand ; Leach, at between twenty-five and thirty thousand ; and, later, one of Ayub Khan's pay-clerks told Captain A. Gaselee of the Quarter-master-General's Staff, that there were twenty thousand Ghazis in the field that day. Accepting Burrows's estimate as correct, the disproportion between the two forces was as one to eleven, and all the advantages of position were on the Afghan side.

Whilst the Advanced Guard had been having its first encounter with the enemy, Burrows had massed the main body and rear-guard around Mahmudabad—part of the Commissariat and baggage train under the village walls, the other part on the further side of the ravine with the smooth-bore Battery and all the Infantry deployed into line, the Field Hospital and Baggage being placed for safety under the sloping bank.<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant E. G. Osborne's division of Horse Artillery, in compliance with Nuttall's request, had gone forward to reinforce the Advanced Guard, escorted by Lieutenant Smith's detachment of Sind Horse.

Up to 11.45 a.m. the Afghans continued moving eastward ; but when the last man had cleared the hills, the long column led by Ghazis wheeled to the right, formed line of battle, and marched south. On its left, which rested on a branch of the ravine, now lying behind the British force, the Ghazis, supported by a few horsemen ; in its centre, seven battalions of regular infantry and three in reserve, the batteries distributed among them at convenient intervals ; on its

<sup>1</sup> "When we all moved up to the front at first, the rear-guard and baggage, not having had any orders, went straight on, the mass of camels, etc., still pushing on slowly and gradually, even whilst the fire had become general. General Nuttall seeing this, sent me across to send the baggage back along with the rear-guard." (Report by Mr. C. L. Griesbach of the Geological Survey of India, who was attached to General Nuttall's Staff.)

right, the cavalry, with the exception of a thousand men held back to meet contingencies, ready at the word of command to encircle the British position. Two thousand yards from that position Ayub Khan's artillery came into action, but the thick haze which hid his batteries from British eyes, kept the Afghan gunners from finding the range, and, for a time, the Armstrong shells flew screaming overhead and fell beyond the Horse Artillery's guns, which were posted as follows :

On the right, Lieutenant N. P. Fowell's two guns, their right guarded by a hundred and thirty sabres, 3rd Bombay Cavalry, under Major A. P. Currie and Captain M. Mayne ; on the left, MacLaine's two guns supported by Monteith's troop of the 3rd Sind Horse. In rear, echeloned on the left of the guns, was a troop of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry under Lieutenant J. H. E. Reid, its left thrown back to watch a large body of mounted Afghans, who were threatening the exposed British flank ;<sup>1</sup> and when Lieutenant Osborne's two Horse Artillery guns arrived from the rear—soon after Blackwood, finding his batteries useless at 2,000 yards,<sup>2</sup> had obtained Nuttall's permission to advance 500 yards nearer the enemy—they formed up between Fowell's and MacLaine's Divisions, whilst their escort went to strengthen the left of the position.

So far Burrows had been inactive ; now, seeing that Ayub Khan's horsemen were beginning to overlap Nuttall's left and rear, he moved up the infantry and smooth-bore battery, when the whole force was disposed in the following order :—

Facing north, to the left of Blackwood's Battery, the guns of which were in échelon of divisions from the left, the Bombay Grenadiers

<sup>1</sup> Nuttall's Despatch, dated 3rd August, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> St. John's Diary of the 27th July. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 149.

Owing to the mirage Blackwood never got the range of his guns properly. Leach was of opinion that this difficulty had never been taken sufficiently into account.—H. B. H.

commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel H. S. Anderson. Pivoted on the right of Blackwood's guns, but facing nearly due east, thus forming what is known as a dead angle,<sup>1</sup> Jacob's Rifles under Colonel W. G. Mainwaring, with five companies of the 66th Foot commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. Galbraith, prolonging the line on their right. The half-company of Sappers under Lieutenant T. R. Henn, acted as an escort to the Horse Artillery guns. Slade's smooth-bores were drawn up behind the Grenadiers, and the Cavalry under Nuttall, who soon drew in all escorts and detachments, were posted on the left rear of that regiment, facing slightly westward, to be ready to meet the masses of Afghan horsemen, threatening to sweep forward and ride them down by sheer weight of numbers. There was no Reserve,<sup>2</sup> and as each corps was greatly outmatched, none could come to the assistance of the others. These dispositions completed, Burrows ordered the Infantry to lie down.

Meanwhile Ayub Khan had seen with his own eyes how small was the space occupied by the British force—hardly the third of a mile—and had issued orders to "*killaband*," in other words, to surround it, bidding his men be ready, at a given signal, to rush in fearlessly on front, flanks, and rear, since they could not be fired upon from all directions.<sup>3</sup> Swiftly and skilfully the Afghan horsemen obeyed their leader's command. In scattered order, manœuvring in circles, they drew closer and closer, spreading out until they enveloped the British left and threatened the baggage, already in danger from the Ghazis, who were working their way down the ravine towards Mahmudabad, with the intention of getting behind the British position. The good dispositions of Major J. T. Ready, the Commander of the

<sup>1</sup> A space at its apex not covered by the defender's fire.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> In the early phase of the battle a wing of Jacob's Rifles was in reserve in rear of the centre; but, when once the Infantry were brought into alignment with Blackwood's Battery, there was neither support nor reserve. (Burrows's Despatch.)

<sup>3</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, 1880, p. 22.

Rear-Guard infantry, averted this danger. Keeping his men well together, he placed Lieutenant R. E. T. Bray, with a detachment of the 66th Foot, at a well-chosen point, from which he was able to frustrate the Afghans' attempts to issue from the ravine.

About one o'clock, when Ayub Khan's enveloping tactics were sufficiently advanced, he moved forward his main body to within a thousand, and shortly after to within eight hundred yards of the British position, on which he concentrated the fire of his thirty guns. A perfect storm of round-shot and shell now burst upon the troops; but, as many of the latter failed to explode, casualties were few, except among the horses, and Burrows, noting with satisfaction that his batteries were making excellent practice, that his cavalry was holding the Afghan horsemen in check, and that the Ghazis were kept to the ravine by the steady fire of Jacob's Rifles and the 66th Foot, felt confident of victory.<sup>1</sup>

A little later more Ghazis were seen approaching from Maiwand, and as, at the same time, the enemy's cavalry was reinforced, two smooth-bore guns under Lieutenant G. S. Jones were sent to strengthen the right flank of the 66th Foot, which had thrown back two companies to meet the expected attack, and two companies of Jacob's Rifles under Lieutenant T. F. T. Fowle, with two 12-pounder howitzers, were despatched to the help of the Grenadiers, the Rifles deploying on the left of that regiment, with their own left thrown back to repulse a flank attack, and the guns coming into action on their left. The two smooth-bores remaining with Slade were formed up on the right of the Horse Artillery, in the interval left by the withdrawal of the two infantry companies.<sup>2</sup>

About an hour after Burrows had made these changes in the disposition of his force, two Afghan horsemen rode boldly up to within three or four hundred yards of the British position, and, having

<sup>1</sup> Burrows's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, and the *Times* Correspondent,



reconnoitred it, rode away unharmed, though the Grenadier sharpshooters fired several shots at them.<sup>1</sup> The object of their reconnaissance was soon apparent, for Ayub Khan now advanced his right wing four hundred yards, but disconcerted by the Grenadiers' fire it quickly broke into groups and melted away, swallowed up by the haze out of which it had emerged. But, meantime, the Afghan Artillery had begun to use grape-shot, its fire crossing in several directions; and, what was worse, two guns, supported by a large body of infantry, appeared suddenly not more than four hundred yards away from the Grenadiers' right front and began searching the line with a raking fire.<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Griffith, who commanded a wing of that regiment, threw back his right company to bring a direct fire on the Afghan guns and their escort, but, well sheltered by a depression in the ground, they continued to hold the position they had gained and to inflict heavy losses on the British troops.<sup>3</sup>

In the hope of keeping down the fire of Yakub's Artillery, Burrows brought back the whole of Slade's Battery, but twelve guns, however steadily served—and the conduct of their gunners was beyond all

<sup>1</sup> St. John's Diary. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> "Two of the enemy's guns now appeared not more than three or four hundred yards distant on our right front, from which they enfiladed our line at an angle of 45°." (*Ibid.*)

"How they got there I cannot say, but it may be safely conjectured that a fold in the ground, similar to that in which the 66th were lying, enabled the commander to bring his battery with its infantry escort, which was entirely invisible, so close to our line without being perceived." (*The Times Correspondent.*)

"With these guns were a regiment of regular infantry and numberless Ghazis." (Colonel Griffith's Narrative.)

<sup>3</sup> Major Leach's Narrative.

"The Afghans certainly fought their guns most gallantly, but I do not think they could have stuck to them as they did without reliefs, and I am inclined to believe that they had a whole battery in the dip behind, from which fresh men came up to man the two guns in action." (*Times Correspondent.*)

praise—could do little against thirty,<sup>1</sup> and the position became desperate when Slade's battery fell short of ammunition. Lieutenant Fowle had to hurry with it to the rear to replenish whilst Slade took over the command of the Horse Artillery from Blackwood, who, badly wounded, had been obliged to leave the guns he had fought so gallantly. Having obtained a small supply of ammunition, Fowle attempted to return with three of the guns to his former position, but was stopped half-way by the enemy, who, during his absence, had got into the British rear.<sup>2</sup>

By 2.30 p.m., the concentrated and enfilading fire of the enemy had told severely on the whole Brigade. On Burrows's Staff, Captain Heath had been killed, and Captain Harris wounded; there had been many casualties among the men and horses of the Artillery and Cavalry;<sup>3</sup> many, too, among the Grenadiers; and, if the 66th and Jacob's Rifles, partially protected by the conformation of the ground, had suffered less, the two companies of the latter regiment that had been detached to meet the attack of the Ghazis had lost their only British officer, Lieutenant D. Cole, killed early in the action, and, as their two senior Native officers had been wounded, the command and, with it, the responsibility for the defence of the most important flank of the line, had devolved upon a Jemadar just when the men's confidence had been shaken by the withdrawal of the howitzers which

<sup>1</sup> "Their artillery was extremely well served. Their guns took ours in flank as well as directly, and their fire was concentrated. We were completely out-matched, and although we continued to fire steadily, our guns seemed quite unable to silence theirs. Their six Armstrong guns threw heavier shell than ours, and their smooth-bore guns had great range and accuracy and caused great damage, especially among our horses and limbers, which were totally without cover." (Lieutenant Fowle's Narrative.)

<sup>2</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, 1880, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> "Nothing could have been steadier or finer than the conduct of all ranks of the cavalry during the very severe and trying cannonade to which they were exposed for about three hours; playing a passive part as escorts to the guns and protecting the flanks from the enemy's cavalry, which literally swarmed round our left flank." (Brigadier-General Nuttall's Despatch.)

had covered their left, and of a portion of the cavalry, ordered off to disperse some Ghazis who were pressing into the rear of the 66th.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the state of affairs when Ayub Khan gave the preconcerted signal for a general attack. Instantly, the Afghan artillery ceased firing, and out of the folds of the ground in which they had been lying hid, rose swarms of Ghazis,<sup>2</sup> who, carrying with them the whole Afghan line, flung themselves with fierce cries on the Horse Artillery Battery<sup>3</sup> which, unprotected by the fire of the Infantry, was at once in imminent danger. Slade had just time to fire a round of case-shot, limber up and gallop to the rear with four of his guns<sup>4</sup> to occupy another position 150 yards further back, but the two in front were rushed by the enemy.<sup>4</sup> Their commander, Maclaine, escaped, but Lieutenant Osborne was killed, helping the men of his own division to limber up.<sup>5</sup> Slade, as he dashed off, shouted to Lieutenant Henn, commanding the half-company of Sappers and Miners, that had been supporting him, that the

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, pp. 22, 24.

"At first our dhoolie-bearers managed to take away some of the wounded men, but soon lots of these poor wretches themselves were knocked over, and the wounded, dead, and dying were left lying in the ranks. . . . Our bheesties worked bravely, at first, bringing up water to our fighting men and wounded, but, after a time, they also did not return from the shelter of the deep nullah in rear. . . . It was then that men, Sepoys as well as Europeans, mad with thirst fell out straggling to the rear for bheesties." (Mr. C. L. Griesbach's Report.)

<sup>2</sup> St. John's Diary. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> "I saw the guns going back at a gallop, and the infantry in full retreat, with the Ghazis after them." (Proceedings of the General Court-Martial on Major Currie: Captain Mayne's examination.)

<sup>4</sup> "The two guns, Horse Artillery, in advance of the centre, were captured by the Ghazis, who rushed through an angle unswept by the fire of our troops, and the others only got away in time." (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 24.)

<sup>5</sup> "Many people think that Maclaine's guns were taken through his own fault in advancing so far to the front; but, on the contrary, he had been recalled and had rejoined the rest of the battery long before; and if the battery had been ever so little in rear, instead of slightly in advance, and in the centre of the line of infantry, I believe the line would never have been broken." (Extracts from notes of his experiences with the Artillery at Maiwand, furnished for the information of his Regiment by Captain N. P. Fowell, Royal Artillery.)

fight was over, and, looking back, he saw the little band rise up, fire three volleys into the Ghazis, and then begin steadily to retire on Mahmudabad, unmoved by the confusion which now reigned over the whole battle-field ;<sup>1</sup> for, just as Maclaine's guns on the British right fell into the enemy's hands, the two companies of Jacob's Rifles on the extreme left were rolled up by the onrush of dense masses of men, and driven helpless and panic-stricken into the Grenadiers. In a moment the latter regiment went to pieces. Its officers did their utmost to restore order, but Colonel Anderson soon fell severely wounded, and when the Adjutant, Lieutenant C. W. Hinde, gave the order to fix bayonets and form regimental square, the companies got jammed together in an arrow-shaped mass, and the tightly packed men could neither use their bayonets nor fire a shot in their own defence.<sup>2</sup> An appalling scene followed as the Ghazis rushing into the surging crowd, where each man was struggling to free himself from his neighbour, dragged one after another into the open and hacked him to pieces with their swords.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, great bodies of Afghans, penetrating into the gap left by the withdrawal of the guns, had fallen on the main body of Jacob's Rifles and hurled them, together with part of the Grenadiers, back upon the 66th, the men of which regiment, dazed with heat and mad with thirst, were fighting desperately against crowds of Ghazis, who, led by standard-bearers, were swarming up from the ravine, falling by scores under the fire of the breechloaders, but still pressing upward,

<sup>1</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Hills at page 24 of his narrative writes :—" Had he (Hinde) ordered company squares, a partial check might have been effected."

Colonel Lyster by this formation saved the position at Ahmed Khel.—H. B. H.

<sup>3</sup> This regiment had lost from 100 to 150 men killed and wounded in the fighting line before they gave way. Leach in his Report says that "up to the last the Grenadiers had certainly behaved well, and the Afghans themselves admit that the Heratis on their right centre twice fell back," under their steady fire.—H. B. H.

undaunted and unchecked. Struck by the Rifles in rear, its centre forced forward by the shock, the line, hitherto steady, broke, and in an instant Englishmen and Natives were mixed up together, a tangled mass, which, without formation or definite object, pressed blindly forward, still firing on the Ghazis in front and the Afghan horsemen behind as it moved along.<sup>1</sup>

At this juncture Burrows, who was busy trying to rally the Grenadiers, sent Leach to Nuttall to ask whether, by a cavalry charge, he could not win a breathing space in which the infantry might reform. Nuttall, ably seconded by his officers, strove hard to get his men together, but demoralized by their own losses—fourteen per cent of their number and a hundred and forty-nine horses out of four hundred and sixty<sup>2</sup>—by the panic among the infantry and by the sight of the multitudes sweeping towards them, only a portion of each regiment could be got to face the enemy and follow their leaders, and these, instead of charging home, bore away to the right and, after dispersing the Ghazis who were attacking the Grenadiers,<sup>3</sup> wheeled about and retired. Burrows coming up at this moment asked Nuttall to make another charge, to which Nuttall replied that he had failed to get the men to the front and that they were heading for the guns, but he would rally them there if possible.<sup>4</sup> Burrows, accompanied by St. John, now made a strenuous effort to turn the 66th and Jacob's Rifles towards the rest of the Force, from which they were rapidly diverging,

<sup>1</sup> "Thrice I fell exhausted after our line was broken, when we retreated in a panic. My captain was killed. I hobbled on between two sepoys at first. . . . The first volley of the 66th stopped the Ghazis, but our Natives broke, and then a panic ensued. I thought our retreat was cut off." (Letter from Lieutenant Lonergan, 66th Foot, published in the *Times* of the 10th September, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> "It will be observed that the necessities of the situation precluded my forming any reserve of cavalry which could be kept out of range of the artillery; the whole available force amounting to 460 sabres." (Nuttall's Despatch.)

<sup>3</sup> Major Hogg was of opinion that this charge saved the Grenadiers; but Nuttall speaks of it as having had little effect.—H. B. H

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the General Court-Martial on Major C. P. Currie. Cross-examination of Brigadier-General Nuttall.



but with only partial success. A portion of the Rifles and a few men of the Berkshire Regiment heard and obeyed the order to follow their General towards Mahmudabad ; but the bulk of the 66th, with some Grenadiers and Rifles entangled in their ranks, continued to work round to their right, with every step widening the distance between them and the main body of the Brigade. Broken into small groups, the Regiment still retained sufficient cohesion to keep the Ghazis at bay, and though on reaching the bank of the nullah, which it had crossed lower down some hours before, the men, hard pressed by their pursuers, literally flung themselves into the ravine ;<sup>1</sup> yet those who succeeded in scrambling up the opposite bank, were again brought into some kind of order by their officers. But beyond the nullah lay the watercourse which connects Khig with Mahmudabad, and, on the further side of this obstacle, Colonel Galbraith, Captains W. H. McMath, E. S. Garratt, F. J. Cullen, Second Lieutenant H. J. O. Barr, and fifty-nine non-commissioned officers and men fell together, Galbraith, colours in hand, rallying his men to the last. The survivors, about a hundred in all, pushed their way through Khig into a walled garden at its southern extremity, and here they fought on—Lieutenant M. E. Rayner, Second Lieutenant W. R. Olivey, Second Lieutenant A. Honywood, and Sergeant-Major A. Cuppage, each, in turn, holding up the regimental colours—till out of that hundred only eight men and two officers, Lieutenants R. T. Chute and C. W. Hinde, were left alive. Charging out of the enclosure, these ten, standing back to back, kept the Ghazis at bay till the last man was shot down.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ The confusion was great from the commencement (of the retreat), but when the retreating line reached the deep nullah, a considerable obstacle at the best of times, it became a regular chaos. Into it they all tumbled pell-mell, and such was the rush that McMath’s Colour-Sergeant fell upon his own sword and was killed.”—Lieutenant O’Donnell, 66th Regiment. See, *The 66th (Berkshire Regiment)*, 1878–1881, by J. Percy Groves, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> All that is known of the 66th’s last fight comes from an Afghan Colonel of Artillery who was an eye-witness of it. (See Lieutenant-General Primrose’s Despatch, dated Kandahar, October 1st, 1880.)—H. B. H.

For a time the only stable element in the defeated Brigade was the handful of Sappers and Miners, which, in retiring, never ceased to show a bold front to the enemy, even after it had lost more than half its numbers, including its gallant leader, Lieutenant Henn, and his two British Sergeants, killed together just outside Mahmudabad ;<sup>1</sup> then the Cavalry rallied and began falling back in good order,<sup>2</sup> covering the rear of the Grenadiers, who, forgetting heat, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, their only thought how to escape the hideous fate which had overtaken their comrades, were flying towards the ravine in front of Mahmudabad, on the further side of which Slade had again brought his guns into action. Behind the guns, crowds of camp-followers, eye-witnesses of the dreadful Ghazi rush, were hurrying towards the desert—dhoolie-bearers, carrying the sick and wounded, dropping their litters; drivers casting off their camels' loads, climbing on their backs and making off with all the speed they could get out of their hungry beasts, leaving the ground strewn with camp-equipage, boxes of ammunition and treasure, commissariat, ordnance, and mess stores.<sup>3</sup>

The fire of the guns checked the advance of the Afghan horsemen and gave General Nuttall and Colonel Griffith the opportunity to collect a part of the Grenadiers ; but many men were so demoralized as to be deaf to all orders, and Lieutenant J. Monteith, who had been sent to bring the stragglers into some sort of formation, could make nothing of them and had to leave them to their fate.<sup>4</sup> By the time he got back

<sup>1</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> "In fact they (the Cavalry) remained on the field after the line had dissolved, and should receive some credit for their conduct in unquestionably checking the pursuit at first." (Ibid. p. 27.)

<sup>3</sup> Surgeon-Major A. F. Preston's Narrative.

<sup>4</sup> Several eye-witnesses report having seen soldiers and followers burst open the treasure boxes, and mess and commissariat stores, and help themselves freely to the coin in the one, and the wine and rum in the other. That the soldiers who took the former were not all thieves, is proved by the fact that the Grenadiers brought in and handed over to the treasury Rs. 13,000 in solid silver. The men who got at the wine and rum fell down drunk on the road

to the ravine, the Afghan artillery had found the range and were playing on the British guns, and as a large body of Afghan cavalry were working round to their rear, Nuttall gave Slade the order to retire.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile General Burrows with Jacob's Rifles and the few men of the 66th that he had induced to follow him, had made his way to Mahmudabad, but not without heavy loss—seventy men at one spot, forty at another. Retreating across the ravine, and through gardens on the outskirts of the village, he occupied a small enclosure behind the walls of which he and the hundred and fifty officers and men left to him were comparatively safe. Soon, however, the enemy began outflanking the position, and Burrows, seeing that his line of retreat was in danger, gave the order to leave the enclosure.

The men scattered on issuing from the garden, and, with a wide plain before them, it seemed unlikely that they would ever come together again or catch up the guns which, by that time, were three miles south of Mahmudabad.<sup>2</sup> Luckily the far-off glitter of helmets caught Leach's eye, and, sending off a warning to Nuttall, he rode out alone to try to turn the fugitives into the right direction. Having succeeded in doing this, he was returning to the guns bringing with him a wounded soldier of the 66th, whom he had picked up, when he came across Lieutenant E. V. P. Monteith,<sup>4</sup> who, on hearing that there were wounded behind, hurried off with his troop to their assistance and rescued several officers and men; others being recovered by Geoghegan, who had been sent out by Nuttall on the same errand. Burrows, who,

and had to be left there to die. In judging these unhappy men, it must be remembered that, as Slade expressed it, "they were suffering the agonies of the damned from thirst."—H. B. H.

<sup>1</sup> Nuttall's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> Burrows's Despatch.

<sup>3</sup> "As the men came out of the enclosure, they were at one point pressed rather closely by some of the cavalry, but a few of the 66th rushed at the horsemen with bayonet and drove them off."—*The 66th (Berkshire Regiment)*, 1878-1881, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> There were three Lieutenants of this name at Maiwand: A. M. Monteith (wounded), E. V. P. Monteith, and J. Monteith.

having given up his horse to a wounded officer, Lieutenant H. Lynch, had as poor a chance of escape as any of his men, was brought on by one of Monteith's Native officers, and reached the guns about half-past three in the afternoon.

A great misfortune more than balanced this unexpected piece of good luck. At the point where the range of hills running down from the Maiwand Pass comes abruptly to an end near the village of Pirzada, the camp-followers struck the broad, well-beaten, direct caravan road to Kandahar, and into this, followed by the infantry, they turned, ignorant of the fact that the wells along it had dried up. Burrows, St. John, and Leach, better informed and horrified at the prospect of suffering and death that lay before the fugitives, did all in their power to divert them into the more circuitous road—the curve, of which the caravan track is the chord—that runs at a short distance from the river Argandab; but when these efforts proved vain, they had to accept their false lead. It was essential, however, that as many horses as possible should be watered, so the cavalry, accompanied by Burrows and St. John, trotted off to Karez-i-Atta, a camping ground on the longer road, a movement which did something to protect the line of retreat from the inhabitants of the villages on its right flank. The pursuit, fortunately, had not been pressed, and though later there were reports of Afghan Cavalry being seen as far as Singiri, distant ten miles from Kandahar, St. John stated positively that he saw none after the first five miles.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the sun was high above the horizon, men longed for night to hide them from the enemy; but when night came it brought with it no respite from misery, as, surrounded on every side by imaginary foes, huddled together in shapeless masses, yet deriving no sense of security from each other's nearness, the bulk of the defeated Brigade and its hapless dependents struggled on, one portion keeping to the

<sup>1</sup> St. John's Diary. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 151.

direct track across the desert, another bearing away to the right towards a belt of cultivated land. Behind this "mass of moaning, agonised humanity,"<sup>1</sup> escorted by Monteith's troop of Sind Horse, crawled the guns, their limbers and wagons crowded with wounded officers and men; and behind the guns, unseen in the darkness, stretched a long irregular line of belated stragglers, straining forward to overtake their comrades. The sufferings of the horses and baggage animals, many of them wounded or lame, were no less dreadful.

A bitter disappointment was in store for the fugitives who, led by Leach, had made for the gardens and orchards in front of the Argandab, for on arriving at Hauz-i-Madat, they found the canal which fertilizes the district, broken and empty. Fortunately, Major Leach knew the place,<sup>2</sup> and he and Slade succeeded in discovering a tank at a little distance from the road. The word was passed that water was at hand, and at once men and animals were fighting with each other to be the first to reach it. It was impossible to exercise control over the frenzied crowd, and, from moment to moment, the crush and struggle grew fiercer and fiercer. Numbers never reached the tank, and of those who did, many were pushed aside on its very bank, by men stronger than they; and when the guns came up, the cries of the wounded, shrieking for the water which they were powerless to obtain for themselves, gave to the awful scene the final touch of hopeless despair.

Soon after midnight the Cavalry rode in, men and horses somewhat refreshed by a two hours' rest at Karez-i-Atta. It had been Burrows's intention to make a second and longer halt at Hauz-i-Madat, but a report that the enemy were firing into his rear made him decide to push on. The mounted troops had behaved with admirable steadiness since Nuttall had rallied them at Mahmudabad, but for four-and-twenty

<sup>1</sup> Major Ashe, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> In May, Leach had been sent to Maiwand with a strong escort to complete the survey of the Kushk-i-Nakhud and the Kakrez valleys, and to ascertain the capabilities of the Maiwand District to support a Brigade.—H. B. H.



hours they had been subjected to an enormous strain, and it was unsafe to prolong it. Besides, much of the Infantry and many camp-followers had already streamed away towards Kandahar, and the Cavalry were needed to protect them ; yet how could he abandon the helpless crowd still gathered round the tank, and the still more helpless weaklings, who had not yet succeeded in reaching it ?

The answer to this cruel question was given by Major Leach, who, with a few men of the cavalry, volunteered to remain behind to collect and bring in the laggards. Leaving Lieutenant Geoghegan's troop of horse to support this gallant band, Burrows resumed his retreat, Nuttall leading with the cavalry whilst he himself remained in rear with the artillery, whose difficulties grew from hour to hour. First, the store limber wagon and spare gun carriage were abandoned, that the bullocks drawing them might be yoked to the guns ; then, one after another of the smooth-bore battery shared the same fate ; but the Artillery guns and the limbers with their human freight were taken on, though, even with the bullocks to help them, the exhausted horses could hardly be brought to pull. So slow was their progress that Leach and his party, with the fugitives they had got together, were able to overtake them ; but in the darkness many men had been overlooked, and among the missing was Lieutenant Maclaine, who had gone in search of water and was never seen again.<sup>1</sup> It transpired afterwards that he had been set upon by Afghans, made prisoner, and carried into Ayub Khan's camp. Both Sandeman and St. John were authorized to offer money for his protection or release ;<sup>2</sup> and the latter informed the Government, on the 25th of August, that continued efforts had been made to obtain his liberation, but without success.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Burrows. Another account says he was captured at Singiri when in search of water for the wounded.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72 ; and, on the 27th of August, he reported to Sir Frederick Roberts that he was still making efforts, but was not very hopeful of success. (*Ibid.* pp. 75, 76.)

Burrows had given orders that the cavalry should remain near the guns, but the men, notwithstanding Nuttall's efforts to check them, pushed on without halting to Ashukan. The commanding officers of both the regiments of which it was composed, were afterwards tried by court-martial and acquitted, the court apparently holding that the limit up to which discipline could be upheld had been passed, and that no one could fairly be blamed for the men's disobedience.<sup>1</sup>

At Ashukan, which General Burrows reached at daybreak, the two howitzers were abandoned, and some of the cavalry were dismounted and their horses harnessed to the limbers that were crowded with wounded. On resuming the retreat the inhabitants fired on the retiring force, killing Lieutenant C. G. Whitby.

Sad as was the spectacle when morning broke, it had one good feature—the long line of fugitives was less thin than might have been expected; but as the sun rose higher and higher, and suffering from heat was added to the pangs of hunger and the agony of thirst, many who had toiled on through the darkness, gave up hope, and dropped down on the parched ground to die forsaken; for men whose nerves were so shattered that they magnified shots fired from a village into the roar of cannon, and saw an Afghan horseman in every bush, had no thought to spare for another's need.

At Singiri, which was reached at 7 a.m., a canal ran close to the road, and here many men tasted the first water that had passed their lips for nearly twenty-four hours. Refreshed by that draught, fifty or sixty men of the infantry were rallied, and when, two hours later, the head

<sup>1</sup> The President said:—"Colonel John Porter Malcolmson, the Court find you Not Guilty of all the charges, and they also desire to acquit you honourably, and will state this separately."

The Court found—"that Major Albert Purcell Currie of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry is Not Guilty of the charges preferred against him, and that he is hereby released." (Proceedings of the General Courts-Martial held at Bombay in March and April, 1881.)

Neither of these officers should have been tried.—H. B. H.

of the straggling column arrived on the right bank of the Argandab, this little band crossed the stream and took up a position on an embankment facing Kokeran, which appeared to be occupied by Afghans. This last anxiety was dispelled when, half an hour later, a detachment of the Poona Horse, commanded by Captain J. W. Anderson, rode in with the news that the village was held not by enemies, but by friends from Kandahar, who, warned of the disaster which had befallen Burrows's Brigade, had come out to render assistance to what remained of it.

For several nights, great beacon fires on all the hills had warned the troops in the cantonment that some unusual movement was on foot. On the morning of the 27th, a gathering of armed men was seen near Old Kandahar ; but when a company of the 7th Fusiliers and one of the 4th Bombay Infantry were sent out to scout the country west and south-west of the city, no signs of an enemy could be discovered. That evening, whilst General Primrose and his Staff were dining in the garden of the Head-Quarters house, a messenger from the Wali arrived with the news that Burrows had marched to intercept Ayub Khan, who was said to be in great strength. Shortly after, the party was attracted to the roof of the house by sounds of musketry proceeding from the neighbouring villages, and it was late when at last it separated. About 2 a.m. next day the Assistant Quartermaster-General, Major Adam, was called up to interview a Jemadar of the 3rd Sind Horse, who, accompanied by twenty-five men, had just arrived with the news of Burrows's defeat. That defeat, according to the account which he now gave to Adam, had been of the most overwhelming character—Burrows and Nuttall killed, and the whole force cut up. Questioned as to how he and his detachment had escaped, he explained that they had been in rear on baggage-guard duty when a badly wounded Major of Artillery,<sup>1</sup> seeing the Ghazis' rush and

<sup>1</sup> This Major of Artillery must have been Blackwood, who never returned to his Battery ; for, had he done so, Slade would have brought him out of action.

the break-up of the British line, had bidden them ride hard to Kandahar and warn Primrose of the disaster, and had given him a pair of binoculars to produce as a proof of the genuineness of his story.

There could be no doubt as to the fact of defeat, but there was room to hope that it had been less complete than the Jemadar believed, and the arrival of the Wali, with a small escort, a couple of hours later, showed that not all who had marched to Maiwand had perished in the engagement; so Primrose, to whom Adam carried the bad news, after consulting with Brigadier-General Brooke, decided that the latter should proceed at daybreak, with two guns, forty sabres, and a hundred and seventy rifles, to be at hand at Kokeran to assist the fugitives who might reach the Argandab; whilst he himself telegraphed the news of the disaster to Simla, evacuated cantonments, and, at the cost of abandoning his communications with India, drew in the garrison of Mundi Hissar and ordered the troops holding Abdul Rahman, Mel Karez, Dabrai, and Gatai to fall back upon Chaman.

The narrow, tortuous streets of Abassabad, a village close to cantonments, were full of armed men when Brooke's little force<sup>1</sup> started out at 5.30 a.m.; but they fell back before his skirmishers, and he got his guns safely through. In the open country he encountered little resistance, but the Afghans hung about and he had to keep clearing his flanks. As the troops advanced signs of the misfortune

on a limber. After getting his wound dressed he joined the 66th Berkshire Regiment, and assisted the men in sighting their rifles. He must have again been severely wounded and carried to the rear, because his body was found close to the ravine.—H. B. H.

<sup>1</sup> STAFF.

Captain F. W. Leckie . . . .	Brigade-Major.
Captain F. C. Keyser . . . .	Orderly Officer.
Surgeon J. McNamara . . . .	Medical Officer in charge.
Two Guns C-2 Royal Artillery . . . .	Captain W. Lane.
40 Sabres Poona Horse . . . .	Captain J. W. Anderson.
3 officers and 70 men 7th Royal Fusiliers . . . .	Lieutenant R. P. B. Rodick,
100 men 28th Bombay Infantry . . . .	Major F. C. Singleton.

which had overtaken Burrows's Brigade grew more and more frequent: dead men, butchered by the villagers within a few miles of safety; living men, dragging themselves along, "dazed, footsore, dying of thirst with a look of bewildered agony on their swollen faces and bloodshot eyes."<sup>1</sup>

As the relieving force approached Kokeran, that village and a fortified post near it were hurriedly abandoned by a large body of armed men, who had already fired on many small bodies of fugitives as they came up from the river, and were lying in wait to overwhelm the main body. Their dispersal made it possible to put the sick men of the Brigade into dhoolies, wait for the loiterers to close up, and get the column into something like order, Anderson watching the ford till the last man in sight had crossed the river, and then returning to Kokeran, where Burrows and Brooke had already met—a pathetic meeting, for the defeated General, worn out with anxiety, suffering, and fatigue, and voiceless with the strain of trying to keep his troops together, was, for the moment, a broken man.<sup>2</sup> Brooke's heart was wrung with pity at sight of his friend's distress, and of the shrunken numbers and miserable plight of the Force which, well equipped and full of life, had marched from Kandahar twenty-four days before.

But no time could be given to condolence or regrets; the one thing needful was to bring these crushed and spiritless troops and their miserable companions into safety, so the homeward march was begun the moment Anderson rode in. The progress was slow, for Burrows's men could scarcely crawl, and there was no question now of leaving the weak behind; all, in one way or another, must be brought on; also, Abassabad and its walled enclosures were found to be

<sup>1</sup> Letter from an officer of Brooke's Force published in the *Times* of the 17th September, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> "Poor General Burrows broke down utterly when he met Brooke, and so did the others when I spoke to them. The poor General was utterly crushed and broken, his sword tied up in a knot and his voice gone." (*Ibid.*)



again strongly occupied, and the place had to be shelled and its streets cleared by Brooke's infantry before Burrows's shattered force could be passed through—this work being facilitated by a company of the 7th Fusiliers, under Captain E. W. Adderley, whom Primrose had ordered to keep the outskirts of the village free from the enemy and to search for stragglers.

At half-past two in the afternoon of the 28th of July, the remnants of General Burrows's Brigade entered the citadel of Kandahar. Out of the two thousand seven hundred and thirty-four officers and men who had gone into action the previous day, eleven hundred and thirty-nine failed to answer when the roll was called; and of these, more than half, and nearly all the seven hundred and eighty-six missing camp-followers, had perished in the retreat. Two hundred and one horses had also been killed, and sixty-eight wounded. The loss in transport was heavier still—two thousand four hundred and twenty-four animals out of the three thousand that had accompanied the Brigade; and the destruction of the transport had entailed the loss of all that depended upon it—60,000 rupees of treasure, commissariat and ordnance stores, including a thousand rifles, more than a quarter of a million of small-arms ammunition, and four hundred and forty-eight nine-pounder shell and case, besides accoutrements, swords, bayonets, tent-equipage, and regimental and private property.<sup>1</sup>

Only one of the guns recovered from Sher Ali's mutinous troops had been saved,—but the Horse Artillery Battery returned with four of its guns, and no men ever better deserved the praise which their General bestowed upon them than did the gunners, who fought them whilst fighting was possible, and then brought them back safely to Kandahar. "Their behaviour was admirable," so wrote Burrows in the Despatch which told the tale of his defeat; "exposed to a heavy

<sup>1</sup> "It is a great disaster—colours, band instruments, and all our baggage and ammunition falling into the hands of the enemy." (Lieutenant Lonergan to the *Times*, 10th September, 1880.)

fire they served their guns coolly and steadily as on parade, and when the guns were rushed they fought the Ghazis with hand-spikes and sponge-rods ;” whilst their commander, Slade, to quote from the same Despatch, “ was not only conspicuous for his gallantry during the day, but, throughout the long and trying retreat of forty miles,<sup>1</sup> worked with unflagging energy, encouraging his men and tending the wounded who crowded his guns.” It fell to others to put on record what the General himself had been to his troops during that terrible day and night. “ He behaved splendidly, and personally saved the lives of three of his officers,” wrote an officer of General Brooke’s force in the *Times* of the 17th of September ; and that journal’s Own Correspondent, in bearing witness to one of these acts of devotion, declared that “ he had heard it remarked more than once that if Burrows had had the good luck to be a subaltern instead of a General, he would have well deserved the Victoria Cross.” There may have been many others of whom the same might have been said <sup>2</sup>—great emergencies are the parents of great deeds—but, in the published and unpublished accounts of the battle and retreat two names stand out pre-eminently—those of Major E. P. Leach, V.C., and the Roman Catholic Chaplain, Father T. Jackson. No man in the Force knew the district, in which the battle of Maiwand was fought and through which the retreat to Kandahar was conducted, as well as Leach, and no man could have turned that knowledge to better account. From the moment when he succeeded Slade as Burrows’s Orderly Officer, he was that General’s right hand ; and when the course of events separated the two, on his own initiative, he carried help and guidance wherever help and guidance were most needed, and vied with Slade in succouring the wounded and encouraging the down-hearted. As for Jackson, when the dhoolie-bearers fled and

<sup>1</sup> He should have said forty-nine miles.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> “ Quarry, Geoghegan, (the) Monteiths, Fowle, and Griesbach should all have had some mention, I think.” (Major Leach.)

## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

the bheesties refused to do their office, it was he who carried water to the wounded, consoled the dying under the heaviest fire; and, though sinking with fatigue, never for a moment deserted his post.

The following return shows the number of officers, non-commissioned officers and men who were killed, wounded, and missing in the Battle of Maiwand.

	EUROPEANS.						NATIVES.					
	Killed.			Wounded.			Missing.			Killed.		
	Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.	Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.	Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.	Native Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.
Staff.	1	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
E-B Royal Horse Artillery	2	12	14	1	12	13	1	6	7	—	—	—
No. 2 Company Bombay Sappers and Miners	1	2	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3rd Sind Horse	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	15	15	1
3rd Bombay Cavalry	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	14	5
66th Foot (The Berkshire Regiment)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	26	18
1st Grenadiers, Bombay Infantry	10	2761	286	2	30	32	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jacob's Rifles, 30th Bombay Infantry	2	—	2	2	—	2	—	—	—	356	364	55
	3	—	3	1	—	1	—	—	—	232	235	25
Total . . . . .	20	290	310	8	42	50	1	6	7	11	643	654
										9	109	118

## SUMMARY.

	<i>Killed and Missing.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>
British Officers . . . . .	21	8
„ Troops . . . . .	296	42
Native Officers . . . . .	11	9
„ Troops . . . . .	643	109
Total . . . . .	971	168
Camp-followers . . . . .	331	7
Transport Followers . . . . .	455 <sup>2</sup>	—
Total . . . . .	786	7

<sup>1</sup> Including a corporal, 59th Foot.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly some of these men were Kandaharis and escaped to their homes.—

# BATTLE OF MAIWAND

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	<i>Killed and Missing.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>
Horses . . . . .	201	68
Grand Total of Casualties . . . . .	<div> <div>Officers, men, and followers, 1925.</div> <div>Horses, 269.</div> <div>Transport animals, 2,424.</div> </div>	

## NOMINAL ROLL OF BRITISH OFFICERS KILLED.

Captain P. C. Heath, Brigade-Major.  
 Major G. F. Blackwood, Commanding E-B Royal Horse Artillery.  
 Lieutenant E. G. Osborne, Royal Horse Artillery.  
 „ T. R. Henn, Royal Engineers.  
 „ W. C. Owen, 3rd Bombay Cavalry.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel J. Galbraith, Commanding 66th Foot.  
 Captain E. S. Garratt, 66th Foot.  
 „ W. H. McMath, 66th Foot.  
 „ F. J. Cullen, 66th Foot.  
 „ W. Roberts, 66th Foot.  
 Lieutenant M. E. Rayner, 66th Foot.  
 „ R. T. Chute, 66th Foot.  
 2nd Lieutenant A. Honeywood, 66th Foot.  
 „ W. R. Olivey, 66th Foot.  
 „ H. J. O. Barr, 66th Foot.  
 Lieutenant C. W. Hinde, 1st Bombay Grenadiers.  
 „ C. G. Whitby, 1st Bombay Grenadiers.  
 Captain H. F. Smith, Jacob's Rifles (30th Bombay Infantry).  
 Lieutenant W. N. Justice, Jacob's Rifles (30th Bombay Infantry).  
 „ D. Cole, Jacob's Rifles (30th Bombay Infantry).

## NOMINAL ROLL OF BRITISH OFFICERS WOUNDED AND MISSING.

Captain T. Harris, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
 Lieutenant H. Maclaine, Royal Horse Artillery.<sup>1</sup>  
 „ N. P. Fowell, Royal Horse Artillery.  
 „ A. M. Monteith, 3rd Sind Horse.  
 „ H. Lynch, 66th Foot.  
 Surgeon-Major A. F. Preston, 66th Foot.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel H. S. Anderson, Commanding 1st Grenadiers.  
 Captain J. Grant, 1st Grenadiers.  
 Major J. S. Iredell, Jacob's Rifles (30th Bombay Infantry).

Besides eleven Native Officers killed, and nine wounded.

<sup>1</sup> Taken prisoner and afterwards murdered.

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. When Burrows learned on the line of march that Ayub's advanced guard was at Maiwand and his main body on the way thither from Sangbur, he had only two courses open to him—to retreat, or to fight, for the limited time at his disposal and his inferiority in cannon,<sup>1</sup> forbade entrenching. Retreat would have been difficult, but not impossible, *if undertaken the moment the truth as to Ayub Khan's movements became known to the British commander.* St. John gave him the news soon after 9 a.m.; it was 11.30 when the Afghan army got clear of the hills; by a careful disposition of his advanced guard which then would have become his rear-guard, Burrows could have hidden his change of direction for some time longer; with a start of two to three hours the Brigade should have been out of reach of the Afghan infantry before Ayub Khan could determine upon his course of action; and though he might have sent his cavalry in pursuit, and a portion of the British baggage might have had to be abandoned, their attacks, unsupported by infantry, would not have had such fatal results as when delivered after the long bombardment, which thinned the ranks of the regiments and shook the nerves of the men, whilst lying idle in the indefensible position into which Burrows had allowed them to drift. In weighing the chances of a successful retreat, it must not be forgotten that the Afghans had marched thirty miles within the foregoing twenty-four hours, and were, therefore, no more fresh than the men they would have followed up; and also that as at this time Ayub Khan's objective seems to have been Ghazni, he would probably have been glad to avoid weakening his force by fighting a general action.

<sup>1</sup> Apropos of taking up a position when threatened by a strong Mahratta force, the Duke of Wellington, then Major-General Hon. A. Wellesley, wrote to his gifted subordinate, Colonel Stevenson:—"Your inferiority in cannon would tell against you more than it would in the case of your attacking the enemy."



To fight without communications, at a distance of nearly fifty miles from a base, without supports or reserves, with a desert in rear, was a risk which any commander might well shrink from taking ; but since this was what Burrows elected to do—he cannot have expected to get away without fighting—the question arises whether there were no tactics by which the battle of Maiwand might have ended in a British victory instead of a British defeat ; and there is a letter of the Duke of Wellington's, then Major-General the Hon. A. Wellesley, dated 12th October, 1803, which indicates such a way. The letter was written to Colonel Stevenson, when the Brigade under that officer was many marches distant from the main British force and threatened by a Mahratta army superior to it in numbers and artillery. *Wellesley let it be seen that he considered Stevenson's wiser course would be to retire towards him ;* but, assuming that he might determine “to have a brush with the enemy,” he first warned him against attacking them in their position, or remaining in his own, and then went on as follows :—“When you shall hear that they are on the march to attack you, secure your baggage and move out of your camp. You will find them in the common disorder of march ; they will not have the time to form, which, being but half-disciplined troops, is necessary for them. At all events, you will have the advantage of making the attack on ground which they will not have chosen for the battle ; a part of their troops only will be engaged ; and it is possible that you will gain an easy victory.”

Supposing Burrows to have been acquainted with this letter and to have determined to act upon the advice contained in it, what should he have done ? He had no camp to move out of, but he could have secured his baggage against any attacks that were likely to be made upon it whilst the engagement lasted, at Mushak which was six miles from Maiwand. Meanwhile he should have reinforced his advanced guard with half a battalion of infantry, replaced the Horse Artillery with half the guns of the smooth-bore battery, and ordered

Nuttall, without committing himself to an action, to make a good show of his force towards Maiwand with a view to deceiving the Ghazis. The safety of his baggage and right flank thus provided for, he should have pushed boldly across the plain to his left with the whole of the Horse Artillery, the half-battery of smooth-bores, and all that remained to him of cavalry and infantry, and have struck Ayub Khan's army "in the common disorder of march" as it came out from behind the screen of hills on the Sangbur road. It would have been a dangerous movement, but less hopeless than standing for hours doing nothing, whilst the Afghan Commander developed his plans and chose his own time for crushing the British Brigade; and if the attack had been delivered with vigour and determination, the half-disciplined Afghan troops, unable to form, might have suffered the defeat which Wellington predicted for the Mahrattas.<sup>1</sup>

Taking into account all the difficulties with which Burrows was confronted, it would be idle to maintain that he could have retreated without considerable loss, or have attacked with the certainty of success; but either course was preferable to marching forward without any plan at all, till pulled up at a point where retreat and successful attack were alike impossible.

OBSERVATION II. The British dispositions at Maiwand were altogether unsound, for the troops at right angles to Blackwood's Battery could do nothing to repulse an attack upon the guns, and they themselves, aligned parallel to the ravine, lay open to an enfilading fire; but, by the time Burrows arrived on the field of battle, he had practically no choice but to accept the position imposed upon his force by the nature of the ground, and the dispositions of the enemy.

OBSERVATION III. Burrows was responsible for the tactics, or

<sup>1</sup> See Map

lack of tactics, which resulted in the defeat at Maiwand ; but responsibility for the strategy which led up to that defeat, rests with his official superiors. He cannot even be blamed for lingering at Kushki-Nakhud, since the mistake was acquiesced in by Primrose and the Commander-in-Chief, both of whom had ample time between the 17th and the 26th of July, in which to order him to return to Kandahar or move on to Maiwand.

Responsibility for the expedition to the Helmand as a whole, lies entirely at the door of the Government of India, which insisted on despatching it against the protests of its Commander-in-Chief ; but Sir F. Haines must share with the Government the responsibility for the pressure put upon the General in the field to attempt the dangerous task of intercepting Ayub Khan's army ; for if he disapproved of the telegrams of the 21st and 22nd of July, he ought to have refused to forward them, and have resigned rather than let them go to Primrose with the sanction of his name—a sanction which, with a man distrustful of his own judgment, was certain to outweigh any misgivings as to the wisdom of the course pressed upon him by the Government. Nine officers out of ten in General Primrose's place would have done what he did—passed on the telegrams to Burrows ; but if, as seems to have been the case, he forwarded the second message without the qualifying words "if you are strong enough to do so," thus turning the expression of the Government's desire into a command, he accepted, as far as his subordinate was concerned, full responsibility for all that might result from obedience to it.

OBSERVATION IV. How far a General should go in obeying instructions of which he disapproves, is a question which can only be answered by a careful consideration of the circumstances in each particular case. An illustration of the circumstances under which obedience to an order should be refused, is to be found in the Duke of

Wellington's early career, when he declined to proceed at once against the French in the Red Sea, on the ground that the force assigned to him was not properly equipped. "You propose," so he wrote to the Governor of Ceylon, on the 18th February, 1801, "that I should proceed without the articles which I have requested the Governor of Bombay to prepare, and you have no doubt that he, or the Governor of Fort St. George, will send them after me. Articles of provision are not to be trifled with, or left to chance; and there is nothing more clear than that the subsistence of the troops must be certain upon the proposed service, or the service must be relinquished."

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### Siege of Kandahar

SORTIE OF THE 16TH OF AUGUST, 1880

THE evacuation of the cantonment outside of Kandahar, begun at dawn on the 28th of July, proved a work of unnecessary difficulty. In the excitement and alarm which followed on the first exaggerated accounts of the Maiwand disaster, General Primrose virtually delegated his powers to Brooke who, before starting out to the assistance of Burrows, had issued orders to shut and barricade all the gates of the city except the Eedgah Gate, on its Northern front, with the result that when the long lines of laden animals, carts, and dhoolies, carefully organized by Major Adam, Assistant Quartermaster-General, and by Deputy Surgeon-General J. O'Nial, arrived at the gates, through which they had been directed to enter the town, all but one came to a sudden standstill. On discovering the cause of this unexpected check to a well-planned movement, Adam hurried to the citadel, where Primrose was busy preparing for the reception of the troops that were to reinforce its garrison, and implored him to have the gates reopened. He pleaded in vain—Primrose could not be induced to reverse Brooke's orders, and the disappointed Staff-officer had to go back to cope, as best he could, with the confusion, which one General had created and the other declined to lighten. Already several trains of baggage animals, turned away from other entrances to the city, were converging on the Eedgah Gate, and



the crush became terrific when, about 9 a.m., the sutlers and shopkeepers who had had shops and stalls in the cantonment bazaar came rushing along, followed by their goods on camels, which, with the connivance of the transport drivers, they had obtained from the Commissariat Cattle Lines. A little later, the mass of men and beasts, struggling to force its way through a single narrow passage, was swelled by the arrival of mounted fugitives from Maiwand, and a little later still by the advent of a wing of the 28th Bombay Infantry, marching up from Quetta with its baggage, stores, and ammunition. To make the situation worse, bodies of armed men, who since early morning had been pouring through the Baba Wali and Murcha passes, began firing off their jezails<sup>1</sup> at long ranges. A few well-aimed shells, thrown into their midst by C-2 Field Battery, commanded by Major P. H. Greig, kept them from rushing the cantonment; but their fire so terrified the Kandahari drivers that many bolted, leaving their strings of camels without an attendant, and a few, taking advantage of the general confusion, even succeeded in carrying off their laden beasts.<sup>2</sup>

Having established some degree of order among the miscellaneous crowds swarming round the Eedgah Gate, Adam returned to cantonments to find that, acting on instructions received from General Brooke, the 4th and 28th Bombay Infantry had marched out and deployed across the road leading to Abassabad, and that villagers, taking advantage of their absence, had rushed the enclosure in which the men's kits had been left and the Sappers' Quarters. The marauders were subsequently expelled, but not till they had looted or burned all the regimental equipment and engineering stores. The loss of the latter proved a severe blow to the force, for it greatly retarded the necessary

<sup>1</sup> A long matchlock.

<sup>2</sup> Major Adam, Assistant Quartermaster-General, says in his comments on the campaign in Southern Afghanistan, 1880:—"When replacing the transport handed over to General Stewart's column, it had been necessary to replace the attendants by men of the country."

work of demolishing walls and buildings in the vicinity of the town, which thenceforward had to be carried out without the help of explosives.

The next incident was the arrival of the main body of Burrows's Brigade, many of the men in so exhausted a state that they sank to the ground as soon as they felt themselves safe, and had to be carried into the citadel, where, by the foresight of Surgeon-Major J. Arnott, shelter and beds were awaiting them.<sup>1</sup> Soon after, General Brooke returned to cantonments with his troops, and at once set every one to work, excusing none and superintending all personally, to get as much property as possible into the Fort. As the sun declined, Primrose sent message after message bidding him abandon his task and retire into the city; but Brooke worked away, putting off his departure from one half-hour to another, till at 6.15 he reluctantly abandoned the hope of saving any more of the loose stores with which the place was littered, and withdrew the troops in perfect order.<sup>2</sup> Scarcely had his men turned their backs on the cantonment than, like a pack of wolves, the Afghans rushed in, and after laying hands on everything they could find, set fire to the bazaar and blew up a stock of gunpowder and kerosene belonging to one of the Kandahar merchants.

The day ended as it had begun, in sadness. About midnight distant shots were heard, and it was afterwards ascertained that some men belonging to Jacob's Rifles and the Bombay Grenadiers,

<sup>1</sup> "Anticipating the necessity of providing for the wounded, I had, a week or two before, spoken to the Colonel who commanded in the Citadel, and we had selected and decided on the quadrangles in the Citadel, where tents could be pitched. The order to do this was given to the Quartermaster, Lieutenant Phillips, and when the wounded arrived we were quite ready for them. I also went to Colonel Shewell and Major Walcott of the Commissariat Department and advised them to lay hold of all the charpoys and chattis possible, and this they promptly did, and both the European and Native wounded, therefore, had beds to lie on." (Extract from Surgeon-Major Arnott's Diary.)

<sup>2</sup> Brigadier-General Brooke's Diary.

who had been trying to make their way into the Citadel by the pass near Old Kandahar, had been discovered by villagers and killed.

From the moment the troops employed in clearing the cantonment entered Kandahar, the city was virtually in a state of siege, and the first business of General Primrose and his Staff was to make such arrangements as would ensure its safety without putting too great a strain on the small force which must hold it till, from one quarter or the other, it should be relieved. The garrison, including the remnant of Burrows's Brigade, and the newly arrived wing of the 28th Bombay Infantry, numbered ninety-seven officers and four thousand five hundred and thirty-three non-commissioned officers and men ; and when Cavalry and Artillery men and four hundred and thirty-eight sick and wounded had been deducted from this total, there remained only three thousand two hundred and forty-three British and Native Infantry soldiers to guard the Citadel and man six thousand one hundred and sixty-five yards of wall, divided as follows :—

South Front	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,300 yards.
West Front	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,987 „
North Front	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,178 „
East Front	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,700 „

To the South Front, commanded by Brigadier-General Brooke, with Major R. J. Le P. Trench in charge of the Shikarpore Gate, four hundred men were allotted ; and five hundred to the West Front, commanded by Brigadier-General Burrows, with Colonel S. de B. Edwards in charge of the Herat, and Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Griffith in charge of the Tope Khana Gate. The defence of the North Front was committed to four hundred men under Primrose's personal command, with Lieutenant-Colonel T. R. Nimmo in charge of the Eedgah Gate, till the pressure of other duties compelled the General to transfer this responsibility to Burrows, Colonel Edwards succeeding the latter General in his original command. Lastly five hundred men were

absorbed by the East Front, commanded by Brigadier-General Nuttall, with Colonel W. Bannerman in charge of the Kabul, and Colonel W. G. Mainwaring in charge of the Durani Gate.

The final distribution of artillery was as follows :—

Ordnance.	Position.	Officer in Charge.	Officer Commanding Force.
9-pdr. M.L.R. gun, C/2nd .	N.-E. Bastion .	Lieut. H. L. Gardiner, R.A.	Major P. H. Greig.
9-pdr. M.L.R. gun, C/2nd, R.A.	Durani Gate .		
9-pdr. ditto, ditto .	Kabul Gate .	Lieut. W. A. Plant, R.A.	Captain G. M. B. Hornsby.
40-pdr. B.L.R. gun, 5/11th .	S.-E. Bastion .		
6-pdr. S.B. gun .	Shikarpore Gate .	Lieut. A. Bell-Irving, R.A.	Capt. J. R. Slade.
40-pdr. B.L.R. gun, 5/11th .	S.-W. Bastion .		
9-pdr. M.L.R. gun, E/B, R.H.A.	S.-W. Bastion .	Lieut. G. S. Jones, R.A.	
9-pdr. ditto, E/B, R.H.A.	Herat Gate .		
9-pdr. ditto, C/2nd, R.A.	Tope Khana Gate .	Lieut. G. B. Smith, R.A.	
40-pdr. B.L.R. gun, 5/11th .	N.-W. Bastion .		
9-pdr. M.L.R. gun, E/B, R.H.A.	N.-W. Bastion .	Lieut. T. F. T. Fowle, R.A.	
9-pdr. ditto, ditto .	Redgah Gate .		
40-pdr. B.L.R. gun, 5/11th, R.A.	S.-W. Bastion of Citadel.		

In reserve two eight-inch mortars.

To complete the defences of the walls, a number of marksmen, commanded by Major F. G. F. Moore, were told off to the bastions and other points suitable for long-range shooting ;<sup>1</sup> two hundred men, under the command of the Officer of the Day, were stationed in the Char-Su, the covered arcade in the centre of the city, to be at hand to go to the assistance of any one of the fronts that might require strengthening, and in the Tope Khana Square—where Colonel C. T. Heathcote was in command—another hundred were always held in readiness to replace men drawn from this first reserve. The remaining troops occupied the Citadel, where all the stores and sick were collected, and into which, in case of need, the whole force could have retired.

The medical arrangements were under Deputy Surgeon-Major J. O'Nial, who distributed his Staff along the different fronts. Signalling stations, superintended by Captain F. C. Keyser, were established at the four angles of the city walls, on the gates, and on the

<sup>1</sup> Primrose's Despatch states that these men did excellent service during the siege.

roof of the Char-Su, connected with one another and with the General's Head-Quarters in the Citadel. Free communication was provided along the entire length of the walls, both on the ramparts above and in the roadway below ; gun platforms, with ramps leading up to them, were constructed in important positions, traverses erected, and all the gates covered with sheet-iron—a necessary precaution since, in 1842, the Afghans nearly succeeded in forcing their way into the city by setting fire to the Herat Gate.<sup>1</sup>

The arrangements for the defence of Kandahar against external foes once well advanced, the time had come to act on Sher Ali's advice to rid the city of dangerous internal elements. The Resident, Colonel St. John, was opposed to the step, believing that there would be little risk in allowing the people to remain in their homes ; but Brooke shared the Wali's opinion as to its necessity, and his arguments prevailed with Primrose. The first ejectment decree was issued and put in force on the 29th of July, the last, disobedience to which was to be visited with the death penalty, on the 3rd of August. Altogether about 15,000 persons seem to have been expelled from the city. The season of the year mitigated to some extent the hardships attendant on turning so large a number of persons of all ages and both sexes out of their homes, and, as had been the case when Sir William Nott carried out a similar measure forty-two years before, " every exertion was made to render it as little oppressive as possible " ; but, now as then, it " could not be altogether free from cruelty and injustice," and only the weakness of the British garrison justified its adoption.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " On the eve of the 10th of March, 1842, the Ghazis swarmed close up to the walls of Kandahar, and at 8 o'clock heaped faggots at the Herat Gate and fired the pile. Saturated with oil, the brushwood blazed up with sudden fury and the gate itself ignited as readily as tinder." (*Kaye's History of the First Afghan War*, Vol. III. p. 152.)

<sup>2</sup> " Every exertion was made to render the measure as little oppressive as possible ; but the expulsion of so many citizens from their homes could not be altogether free from cruelty and injustice." (*Ibid.* p. 150.)



For the troops there were ample food stuffs in stock,<sup>1</sup> but only a thirteen days' supply of grain and bhusa for cattle of all sorts ;<sup>2</sup> so, first, the transport animals and, later, the horses and gun bullocks were put on reduced rations. There had been some talk of sending away the greater part of the camels to relieve the pressure on the reservoirs in the Citadel,<sup>3</sup> but, luckily, Major Adam soon discovered other sources of supply—most houses have their wells—and the only beasts dispensed with were some two hundred and fifty broken-down camels which were turned out to shift for themselves.

It was fortunate for Primrose and his troops that Ayub Khan could not follow up his victory at Maiwand by an immediate advance on Kandahar. It took him some days to attend to the wounded and bury the dead—he admitted a loss of fifteen hundred troops, and the Ghazis described their losses as “ beshumar ” (countless)<sup>4</sup>—and he was further delayed by the discord reigning in his camp ; Regulars and Irregulars, Heratis and Kabulis quarrelling over the spoil. This respite enabled the garrison to clear away a number of houses lying close up to the gates of Kandahar, to open out vistas for the cannon by cutting down trees, to lay down wire entanglement all round the walls, to strengthen weak places with abattis, and to take the range of prominent objects on all sides of the city, and post up range tables in the bastions and gateways.

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the troops there must have been at least 4,000 camp-followers in the city.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> 1,244 horses, 373 artillery bullocks, and 1,826 transport animals, of which more than half were camels.—H. B. H.

<sup>3</sup> “ My anxiety was the fearful cry of water ! water ! rising up everywhere. The canal supply had been cut off for two days past ; the Karez Hill aqueduct was practically in the possession of the enemy, and for the moment our only available supply was in two reservoirs in the Citadel, containing a few thousand gallons of green stuff.” (Major Adam, Assistant Quartermaster-General.)

<sup>4</sup> “ The losses inflicted upon the Ghazis were summed up by themselves as ‘ beshumar ’ (countless)—3,000 to 4,000—and they added that it took them seven days to bury their dead.” (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 29.)

The business of destroying buildings that could afford cover to the enemy was carried on from the first under harassing conditions.<sup>1</sup> Armed tribesmen, hidden in watercourses, walled gardens, and loop-holed houses, kept up a galling fire on the working and covering parties, so that more than once they had to be recalled ; and though the villagers were poor marksmen and their weapons of very inferior quality, yet, during the siege, those parties had twelve men killed, and one officer, Lieutenant G. A. C. de Trafford, and forty men wounded.<sup>2</sup> The work of construction inside and of destruction outside the city was under the supervision of the Commanding Engineer, Lieutenant-Colonel J. Hills ; and he and his four assistants, Major E. P. Leach, Captain G. M. Cruikshank, Lieutenant G. T. Jones, and Lieutenant E. A. Waller, the only available Engineer officers in the place, had their hands full all day and every day.

On the 31st of July, the tribesmen occupied Khairabad and a Ziarat (shrine) lying to the north of that village, close up to the Citadel's north-eastern bastion. Of the former they retained possession, but they were driven out of the latter by three companies of the 28th

<sup>1</sup> " This work should unquestionably have been done during the previous year when General Stewart held Kandahar, as it is surely the duty of any General occupying a foreign country to put the defensive places in thorough order, in order to meet all contingencies. General Primrose, a weak officer, followed this example, and in spite of the representations of General Brooke and the Commanding Royal Engineer, nothing was allowed to be done." (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 35.)

" This little affair of the patrol (which was fired into close to cantonments) is another excellent instance of how little Sir D. Stewart did to make the position here as good in a military sense as it could be, as, had he done so, he would not have left a wall or enclosure standing within 1,000 yards of our camp anywhere." (Extract from General Brooke's Diary, 19th July.)

<sup>2</sup> " In no siege in history has it been necessary for the defenders to sally out by daylight each day and remove walls, fill up ditches and demolish cover outside the defences of an invested town, and in doing so be exposed to the fire of the besiegers. The converse has been always the case, and it says much for the troops that they proceeded cheerfully to carry out their work, often forced to turn their backs to the fire of the enemy while working or pushing the high walls down." (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, pp. 36, 37.)

Bombay Infantry and a detachment of the Poona Horse. In the days that followed this affair, in which the enemy lost fifty men, and the Bombay regiment only one man killed and three wounded, reconnaissances were pushed out to Abassabad and the Baba Wali Pass, from which latter point large bodies of footmen and horsemen could be seen moving up from Khelat-i-Ghilzai, Kushab, and Mundi Hissar, while Chihilzina, and the Karez and Picket Hills were alive with Ghazis.

Crowds of these formidable fighters accompanied Ayub Khan's vanguard when, on the 5th of August, it arrived before Kandahar and occupied the abandoned cantonment and the villages on the eastern and southern fronts of the city. The Afghan camp was pitched, in the first instance, behind Picket Hill, but a reconnaissance, followed by a well-directed fire from the British guns, led to its being shifted to a position near Old Kandahar; and here, two days later, Ayub Khan concentrated his entire force.

In the interval between the appearance of the Afghan army's advanced guard and the arrival of its main body, Colonel St. John managed to get a message through to Chaman, reporting that the enemy had crossed the Argandab and occupied Kokeran. This message reached General Phayre on the 9th of August, and the following day he received from Major Adam a letter dated the 5th, which gave an encouraging report of the morale and prospects of the besieged garrison.

Early on the morning of the 8th of August, the Afghan artillery opened fire on the Citadel from Picket Hill, and shortly afterwards on the city from Deh Kwaja and Deh Khati. The bombardment continued for many days, but it made no impression on the substantial walls, and did little harm to the troops and animals sheltered by them; still, day by day, as the besiegers occupied fresh villages and turned canal banks and all available accidents of the ground into something approaching to regular parallels, in which, here and there, they mounted guns,<sup>1</sup> the work of clearing open spaces round the

<sup>1</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 37.

city grew more and more difficult and dangerous. On the 12th, whilst working parties under Lieutenant Waller were busy opening up enclosures close to the south-east angle of the walls, a galling fire was brought to bear upon them from a garden near at hand. To put a stop to this annoyance, Captain E. W. Adderley, with twenty men of the 7th Fusiliers and detachments of the 19th and 30th Bombay Infantry, burst through a gap in the garden wall and fell upon the enemy, who fled, leaving eighty dead behind, among them their leader, Afzul Khan, brother to the Commander of Ayub Khan's cavalry, killed by Waller in single combat, whilst the assailants lost one man killed and eight wounded. Later in the day, Lieutenants Waller and Jones, and a corporal of the 7th Fusiliers sallied out of the Eedgah Gate, under a heavy fire, to rescue a wounded soldier, who had been overlooked when the working party re-entered the town. The non-commissioned officer was shot dead, but the two officers brought in his body, and the man in helping to save whom he had lost his life.<sup>1</sup>

The next morning, Afghan troops occupied Deh Kwaja, Khairabad, and the Ziarat near the latter village from which the tribesmen had been driven on the 31st of July; and the same day Primrose received information that Ayub Khan had prepared scaling ladders, and was intending to make an assault on the city at a point opposite Deh Kwaja, where the walls were only fourteen or fifteen feet high, and in a dilapidated state, and where a couple of Ziarats, too strong and big to be pulled down, and many walled enclosures would afford shelter to his skirmishers and covering parties.<sup>2</sup>

The occupation of Khairabad was a serious matter, for guns planted on its walls would sweep with an enfilading fire the entire

<sup>1</sup> "Captain Adderley received a well-earned Brevet-Majority, but Lieutenants Waller and Jones were passed over, though they were both recommended for the Victoria Cross." (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 37.)

<sup>2</sup> Adam's *Comments on the Campaign in Southern Afghanistan*, 1880.

northern front of the city, which cavalry patrols had hitherto kept clear of the enemy. It was of the utmost importance that the garrison should retain the freedom of egress and ingress which it had so far enjoyed; for, without that freedom, not only would access to the water supply on which the cavalry horses and transport animals depended, and to the trenches in which the refuse of the town was daily buried, be cut off, but there would be no further possibility of meeting an attack on any one of the city fronts by a flank counter-attack,<sup>1</sup> or of operating against the enemy in any way which the course of events might suggest. Yet, the report that Ayub Khan was preparing an assault so alarmed Primrose that the Commanding Engineer had difficulty in dissuading him from shutting and barricading the Eedgah Gate.

On the 14th of August, the Signalling Officer, Captain Keyser, reported that a body of five hundred Afghan regular troops had reinforced Deh Kwaja, and Hills laid before the General a plan for forestalling Ayub Khan's designs by a sortie directed against his positions to the east of Kandahar. According to this plan, a strong cavalry force was to slip out of the Eedgah Gate before dawn of the selected day and, keeping well to the east of Khairabad and Deh Kwaja, take up a position south of the latter village, ready to intercept any reinforcement that might be sent to its assistance. There was to be no preliminary bombardment, but the guns on the eastern rampart were to be trained ready to support the cavalry, and two field guns were to accompany the three infantry regiments—the 7th Fusiliers, and the 4th and 19th Bombay Infantry—that at day-break were to rush Khairabad, and then to swing round and seize a high house at the north-east corner of Deh Kwaja, the roof of which

<sup>1</sup> "I told Primrose, when he asked me what should be done if the Afghans attempted an assault on any of the gates, that the only practical thing was self-evident—namely, to send out a regiment or two from the Eedgah Gate and take the attack in flank." (Letter of Hills to the Assistant Quartermaster-General.)



dominated all the neighbouring buildings. As soon as this house which, being the furthest from Kandahar, was pretty certain to lie open and undefended, had been captured, the field guns were to take up a position on a low hill between the two villages and to bring an enfilading fire to bear along Deh Kwaja's west front, whilst the infantry—the three regiments keeping well together—were to march right through the village and, passing out through the western entrance, make straight for the Kabul Gate, which was to be opened to admit them, capturing on their way any guns they might come across, and destroying all loopholed walls facing towards the city.<sup>1</sup>

So long as the author of this scheme was there to explain and support it, it seems to have commanded Primrose's approval; but no sooner had Hills left him than he sent for Brooke, who declared that he saw no good reason for any sortie, but, if there was to be one, it must be on entirely different lines from those proposed by the Commanding Engineer.

The idea of a sortie having once taken root in Primrose's mind, he was not prepared to put it aside; but he was quite willing to leave the responsibility for it to his Second-in-Command; and to avoid the necessity of having to decide between Brooke's plan and Hills's in the presence of other men, he actually omitted to invite the latter to Head-Quarters House when he summoned his other chief officers to hear Brooke propound his scheme, and to be instructed in such details as fell within each man's province.

Officially present at the meeting were—

General Primrose,

Brigadier-General Brooke,

„ „ Burrows,

„ „ Nuttall,

Colonel W. French, Commanding the Artillery,

Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Shewell, Deputy Commissary-General,

Deputy Surgeon-General J. O'Nial,

<sup>1</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 38.

but Major C. J. Burnett, Assistant Adjutant-General, and Major Adam, Assistant Quartermaster-General, were in the room and heard all that passed.

After Primrose had opened the proceedings by announcing that there was to be a sortie, that Brigadier-General Brooke would be in command, and that all arrangements were to be made by him, Brooke unfolded his scheme, which reversed every disposition recommended by Hills except the part that he had assigned to the Cavalry. Instead of a large force, a small one was to be employed ; the Infantry was to move out of the Kabul, not the Eedgah Gate, and cross a space half a mile broad exposed to the fire of the Afghans holding Deh Kwaja, instead of moving over an open front ; the operation, instead of embracing both Khairabad and Deh Kwaja, was to be confined to the latter village, which was to be attacked at two widely separated points, instead of at one point only. Instead of the force being kept well together, and marching as a compact body right through the village from the corner furthest from Kandahar to the exit nearest to that city, losing nothing of its strength by holding positions on its road—one of the columns was to traverse the village from west to east, the other, from south to north ; and as each was to come out by the gate by which it had gone in, detachments were to be left at every cross-street to cover the retirement. Finally, instead of the sortie being conducted with the utmost secrecy and despatch, an hour's preliminary bombardment was to give the widest possible notice of the impending movement, and ensure to the enemy the time to assemble in force to resist it.

The officers to whom Brooke explained his plan, seem to have seen nothing in it to object to ; but the two who had not been asked to consider it, had listened in growing uneasiness and amazement, and when it came to the mention of a bombardment, Adam could contain himself no longer. "For heaven's sake," he exclaimed, "don't let there be any preliminary bombardment. If there is to

be a sortie, let it be a surprise with the bayonet, and having captured the enemy's guns, retire quickly to the city." For a moment Brooke stared at the audacious speaker, and then, turning to Primrose, said deliberately:—"Sir, I wish the guns to open before the attack is made," and Primrose answered, "Certainly; see to this, Colonel French."

The sortie was fixed for the next morning and the following troops were to take part in it:—

100 men	.	.	.	.	.	.	3rd Bombay Cavalry,
100 „	.	.	.	.	.	.	Poona Horse,
100 „	.	.	.	.	.	.	3rd Sind Horse,
4 companies (about 300 men)	.	.	.	.	.	.	7th Bengal Fusiliers,
4 „	„	„	„	.	.	.	19th Bombay Infantry,
4 „	„	„	„	.	.	.	28th „ „

in all, three hundred cavalry and nine hundred infantry. The latter Brooke divided into three columns. The first column, commanded by Colonel A. G. Daubeney, consisted of two companies of the 7th Fusiliers and two of the 19th Bombay Infantry; the second, under Lieutenant-Colonel T. R. Nimmo, of one company 7th Fusiliers and three of the 28th Bombay Infantry; the third, commanded by Colonel C. T. Heathcote, of one company of the 7th Fusiliers, two of the 19th and one of the 28th Bombay Infantry. To the last-named column was attached the squadron of the 3rd Sind Horse, and each of the three was accompanied by an Engineer Officer, a few Sappers and Miners, and a Medical Officer, with a proper complement of dhoolie-bearers and water-carriers.

Before dawn on the 16th of August, the artillery on the eastern face of Kandahar—one forty-pounder, three nine-pounders, and two eight-inch mortars, under Major P. H. Greig's command—were trained ready to bombard Deh Kwaja, and the squadron of the 3rd Sind Horse and the infantry to be employed in the sortie drawn up in the streets

adjoining the Kabul Gate.<sup>1</sup> The other two squadrons assigned to Brooke had already passed out of the Eedgah Gate, and, making a wide détour to avoid Khairabad and Deh Kwaja, were well on their way to their appointed position at the south-east corner of the latter village, when Greig received the order to open fire, an order which he obeyed, but not without pointing out its folly. His remonstrance was quickly justified, for the booming of the cannon awoke the country-side, and soon, from the south, swarms of Ghazis were hastening towards the threatened village. A spirited charge of a troop of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry led by Lieutenant Geoghegan compelled them to seek safety in broken ground, but if the pressure of the Cavalry kept the Ghazis out of Deh Kwaja, it kept the inhabitants of that village in. At the first discharge numbers had rushed to the gates furthest from the city, but, seeing that the way of escape was barred, turned back to fight with all the fierce courage which comes to men caught in a trap ; and it was under a heavy fire from the village walls that the first and second columns issued from the Kabul Gate and, taking advantage of the cover afforded by enclosures and watercourses, advanced to the attack. The space to be traversed measured a little under a thousand yards, and for two-thirds of the distance the whole force kept together, then Nimmo's troops diverged to the left, and at 5.30 both columns penetrated into the village, the first pushing into it from the south and slowly fighting its way northward, whilst the second entered on the western side and worked its way eastward.<sup>2</sup> Along both lines of advance the resistance offered was fierce and stubborn. Every door was blocked, every wall loopholed, and behind every loophole was a rifle. As the columns advanced they began to lose

<sup>1</sup> " During the half-hour's cannonade, the columns had to wait in the street adjoining the Kabul Gate, and were in very good fettle, looking cheerful and animated. I remember particularly noticing young Wood of the 7th Fusiliers, evidently full of enthusiasm." (Diary of Surgeon-Major J. Arnott.)

<sup>2</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 40.

cohesion and to dwindle away, as more and more men had to be detached to guard their flanks and rear.

Whilst the first and second columns of Brooke's force were struggling against overwhelming odds in the narrow streets of Deh Kwaja, the two companies of the 19th Bombay Infantry belonging to the third column had gone forward to support the Cavalry, arriving just in time to assist Nuttall in repulsing a second and more formidable attempt on the part of the Ghazis to force their way into the village. Their numbers swelled by many fresh contingents, they were pressing boldly forward, when three well-aimed volleys from the British breech-loaders threw them into disorder, and Nuttall, charging with all his force, drove them back with heavy loss into the broken ground from which they had emerged. By this time, the remainder of the Reserve column, which had been standing idle, apparently without any orders, at the Kabul Gate, was in motion, and it continued to advance till it came within three hundred yards of the village's western wall.<sup>1</sup> Here it halted under such cover as it could find, but the enemy's fire was very heavy and many of the troops were hit—amongst others Colonel Malcolmson and Lieutenant-Colonel Shewell; the latter was not with the column, but had rushed out of the Citadel to the rescue of a wounded private of the 7th Fusiliers.

Meanwhile affairs inside the village were going from bad to worse. Daubeney's troops, who had been joined by some of Nimmo's men, had, indeed, fought their way through to the lofty house at its north-east corner, a building which was to have played an important part in Hills's plan, but which in Brooke's only served as a grave for the non-commissioned officer and fifteen men of the 28th Bombay Infantry told off to defend it. Retirement was now the object to be aimed at—but by what road? In front, crowds of Ghazis, issuing from Khairabad, were ready to dispute any attempt to re-enter Kandahar by the

<sup>1</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 40.



Eedgah Gate ; and, in rear, all the inhabitants of Deh Kwaja were waiting to fall upon the diminished column if, encumbered by wounded, it should venture to retrace its steps. Either course was fraught with danger ; both seemed almost hopeless unless the troops' stock of ammunition, which had been nearly exhausted in the advance, could be renewed ; so Brooke despatched his Brigade-Major, Captain F. W. V. Leckie, to Primrose to ask for a fresh supply and to report that the position was untenable. Leckie got through with the message, but it had been better undelivered ; for Primrose, overwhelmed by the discovery that the sortie had failed, lost his head, and, instead of taking steps to extricate the troops in Deh Kwaja from their difficulties, gave orders that the retreat should at once be sounded from the battlements,<sup>1</sup> thus leaving Brooke no time to mature his preparations for retirement, and announcing to the Afghans the end of the enterprise as, by the bombardment, he had warned them of its beginning. In vain Hills entreated to be allowed to take out a few men to support the retreat, Primrose declared that not a man should go—the loss had been heavy enough already, and “ It is all your doing,” he cried. “ I am damned if it is,” retorted the indignant Engineer. “ You have done everything I told you decidedly and strongly was not to be done—bombardment, small force, separate attacks, and wrong end of the village, and you never informed me of all these changes. I told you, moreover, that it was no child's play, this sortie, and that if you did take it up, it must be carried out thoroughly and with every available man.”

The retort was true ; but it only embittered Hills's relations with the General, and did nothing to shake the latter's determination to leave the troops in Deh Kwaja to get out of their difficulties as best they could. The bugles sounded the fatal call, and Brooke, understanding the message of abandonment which it conveyed, sent word

<sup>1</sup> “ On receiving this request General Primrose, losing heart, ordered the retreat to be sounded.” (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 40.)

to Nimmo to withdraw through the centre of the village on the Kabul Gate; despatched a note to Nuttall asking him to cover with his cavalry the retirement of the two companies of 19th Bombay Infantry which had come to his support; directed Daubeney to fight his way to the Eedgah Gate; and then turned back with a handful of men to collect the detachments dropped in the advance, and either bring them into safety or perish with them. Unfortunately, by his instructions to Nuttall, he had made the latter the more likely alternative; for, the moment the cavalry began moving towards the town, the Afghans, whom they had so long held in check, poured into Deh Kwaja, so that the little British force, amounting in the end to nearly two hundred men, had to face many fresh foes. Near the southern exit Brooke was met by a large body of the enemy, but charging through them with the bayonet, he got his men clear of the village and into a dry ditch about a hundred and twenty yards from its walls, where he halted them to wait till Captain Cruikshank, who had been severely wounded, could be brought up. The delay was short, but it gave the Afghans, who had been scattered by the impetuosity of the British charge, time to draw together, and when the troops rose from the ditch to make a dash for the next cover, a heavy fire laid many low, amongst them Brooke himself.<sup>1</sup> An ugly rush of the Ghazis followed, but the men were well in hand and their steady volleys again drove off their assailants; yet, with fresh swarms gathering on every side and failing ammunition, it was impossible to stop to take up the dead or even to seek for the wounded, and they could only fall back slowly till, terribly reduced in numbers, they reached the Kabul Gate, through which the Reserve and the Cavalry had already entered the city.

Colonel Heathcote, in command of the former body, had ignored the signal to retreat, though his ammunition was running short, and held

<sup>1</sup> "General Brooke, who throughout acted in a most gallant manner, and who eventually lost his life in trying to save that of a brother officer and other wounded men, was killed." (Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 41.)

on to his position in front of Deh Kwaja till Lieutenant E. O. F. Hamilton, Primrose's Aide-de-Camp, brought him positive orders to withdraw.<sup>1</sup> As his troops retired, two riderless horses rushing madly by—one of them Brooke's white charger—told a tale of disaster, and soon after Brooke's orderly officer, Lieutenant H. St. L. Wood—a ghastly figure, all covered with blood—staggered into their midst, gasping out that the General was in deadly peril and imploring aid for him and his men.<sup>2</sup> So far as Brooke was concerned assistance would have come too late, and Primrose's imperative orders made it impossible to give organized help to his hard-pressed troops, but individual officers—Burnett, Leach, Adam, Caldecott,<sup>3</sup> and others<sup>4</sup>—sallied out through the Kabul Gate and were active in bringing in the wounded and maintaining order, whilst Surgeon-Major J. Arnott and Surgeon E. W. Kellsall went out some two or three hundred yards with a dhoolie in the hope of discovering Brooke and Cruikshank, but neither the General nor any other wounded man was in sight. Meanwhile the Cavalry, and the two companies of the 19th Bombay Infantry covered by it, had made good their retreat; not, however, without many casualties owing to the cramped nature of the ground, which compelled them to retire in close formation;<sup>5</sup> Daubeney's troops, bursting through the northern boundary of Deh Kwaja into the open ground lying between that village and Khairabad, had charged through the Ghazis who attempted to cut them off from the Eedgah Gate and got safely back into the Citadel; and Nimmo had brought his column out of the village through the entrance by which it had gone in, and was retreating over the ground recently occupied

<sup>1</sup> Diary of Surgeon-Major J. Arnott.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Major F. J. Caldecott, R.A., Commissary of Ordnance.

<sup>4</sup> Amongst the first to go out under the hottest fire were two young subalterns—Lieutenants W. Adie and M. B. Salmon—who brought in a wounded man. The latter went out a second time, descending from the ramparts by a rope ladder. Both these young officers deserved the Victoria Cross.—H. B. H.

<sup>5</sup> Primrose's Despatch.

by the Reserve. The Artillery on the ramparts did much to facilitate the retirement on both sides of the city ; and it rendered a still greater service to the garrison by silencing the fire of the Afghan guns on Picket Hill and in the General's garden, under cover of which Ayub Khan was trying to form up his infantry near the old cantonment.

By 7.30 a.m., the Cavalry and all the three columns had returned to the shelter of the walls ; but, of the twelve hundred men who had gone out three hours before, a hundred and six had been killed and a hundred and eighteen wounded ; eight British officers being amongst the former and seven amongst the latter. The following table shows the distribution of these losses amongst the different corps.

TABLE.

	EUROPEANS.						NATIVES.					
	Killed.			Wounded.			Killed.			Wounded.		
	Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.	Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.	Native Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.	Native Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.	Total.
Staff . . . . .	3	—	3	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Poona Horse . . . .	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1	—	4	4
3rd Sind Horse . . .	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	6	6	—	2	2
3rd Light Cavalry . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	3	9	12
No. 2 Company Sappers and Miners . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	6	1	6	7
2-7th Royal Fusiliers .	2	22	24	2	28	30	—	—	—	—	—	—
59th Regiment, attached to 2-7th Regiment .	—	2	2	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
19th Regiment Bombay Infantry . . . . .	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	20	20	1	24	25
28th Regiment Bombay Infantry . . . . .	1	—	1	1	—	1	—	30	30	—	22	22
Total . . . . .	8	24	32	7	30	37	1	66	67	5	67	72

## RECAPITULATION.

<i>Killed.</i>	{	8 European Officers . . . . .	}	106	}	224
		1 Native Officer . . . . .				
		90 Non-commissioned Officers and men . . . . .				
		7 Followers . . . . .				
<i>Wounded.</i>	{	7 European Officers . . . . .	}	118		
		5 Native Officers . . . . .				
		97 Non-commissioned Officers and men . . . . .				
		9 Followers . . . . .				
37 horses killed and 35 wounded.						

## NAMES OF OFFICERS KILLED.

Brigadier-General H. F. Brooke, in Command of Sortie.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Newport, 28th Bombay Infantry.  
 Major R. J. Le P. Trench, 19th Bombay Infantry.  
 Lieutenant F. C. Stayner, 19th Bombay Infantry.  
 2nd Lieutenant F. P. F. Wood, 2-7th Fusiliers.  
 2nd Lieutenant E. S. Marsh, 2-7th Fusiliers.  
 Captain G. M. Cruikshank, Royal Engineers.  
 The Rev. G. M. Gordon, Chaplain, Church Missionary Society.

## OFFICERS WOUNDED.

Colonel T. R. Nimmo, 28th Bombay Infantry.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Shewell, Staff (subsequently died).  
 Colonel J. H. P. Malcolmson, 3rd Sind Horse.  
 Major T. B. Vandeleur, 2-7th Fusiliers (subsequently died).  
 Captain W. Conolly, 2-7th Fusiliers.  
 Lieutenant H. St. L. Wood, Staff.  
 Surgeon A. K. Stewart, Poona Horse.

The failure of the sortie brought no discredit on the troops engaged in it. In the despatch that described the operation, General Primrose declared that no words of his could express his appreciation of the cool and gallant behaviour of all ranks, and he singled out for special commendation Brooke, who lost his life in trying to save Cruikshank; Second Lieutenant E. S. Marsh, killed in helping to bring in Lieutenant F. P. F. Wood; the Rev. G. M. Gordon of the Church Missionary Society, mortally wounded, whilst ministering to the men under a heavy fire; the Rev. Father Jackson, who, on this occasion as



on many others, was in the forefront of the fight attending to the wounded, both European and Native ; Surgeon-Major B. T. Geraud, whose devotion to the wounded on the field had frequently elicited his (the General's) admiration ; and Lieutenant W. St. L. Chase and Private Ashford, 7th Fusiliers, who under a heavy fire had carried a wounded man from the front to a place of safety. The two latter he recommended for the Victoria Cross, which they subsequently received.

The courage and gallantry lauded by Primrose had a marked effect on the subsequent course of events. The Ghazis, who had not doubted their ability to wipe out of existence the six hundred men so rashly thrown into Deh Kwaja, were bitterly disappointed at their comparatively small measure of success ; and, deeply impressed by the steadiness of the Cavalry outside, and the fighting qualities of the Fusiliers and the Bombay regiments inside the village, they lost much of the boldness which had marked their movements since their victory at Maiwand. A sense of insecurity which took possession of all minds, found expression in the abandonment of Khairabad ; in the return to their homes of many Zemindawaris and other tribesmen, who had flocked from a distance to Ayub Khan's standard ; in the demand of the regular troops holding Deh Kwaja to be withdrawn from a village in the defence of which they had not—so they complained—been properly supported ; and in the fact that, for two days and nights after the sortie, the whole Afghan army remained under arms, expecting to be attacked. So rude, indeed, was the shock to the army's morale that, though siege operations were carried on for a few days longer on the southern and western fronts of Kandahar, and some shots were fired from the batteries on Picket Hill and in the General's garden, no further attempt was made to invest the city ;<sup>1</sup> and Ayub Khan, recognizing that he could neither

<sup>1</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 42.

capture it by a *coup de main* nor reduce it by famine—he himself was in great straits for food—would have abandoned the siege and retired to Girishk,<sup>1</sup> but for the opposition of his Kabul troops and the vehement protests of the inhabitants of the villages implicated in the murder of the stragglers from Maiwand, who expected vengeance to fall upon them the moment his protection was withdrawn.<sup>2</sup> Strong in numbers and having the granting or withholding of supplies largely in their hands, these men kept him in the position he had taken up on the 7th of August till the 23rd, when rumours of the approach of a relieving force marching from Kabul, led to his abandoning the villages to the east and south of the town ; and on the 24th, on receipt of certain information that General Roberts had arrived at Tirandaz, he removed his camp from the ruins of Old Kandahar to a position behind the Baba Wali Pass, close to the left bank of the Argandab, and sent to Herat for a fresh supply of ammunition.

The next day, General Primrose reconnoitred the whole of the enemy's late position from Picket Hill and the Cantonment right round to Deh Kwaja, and found that all villages had been deserted and all cannon removed. A working party was immediately detailed to bury the bodies of the officers and men left on the ground when the troops retreated into Kandahar after the sortie. Between forty and fifty corpses were interred, and General Brooke, Colonel Newport, and Captain Cruikshank were identified. The same day Major Vandeleur, one of the officers wounded on the 16th of August, died in hospital, but Colonel Shewell lingered till the 2nd of September.

Satisfactory news up to the 12th of August had been received from Colonel Tanner, who reported the country round Khelat-i-Ghilzai free from hostile gatherings ; but no communication from the Indian Government had reached Primrose since the 28th of July, and only one letter, dated August 6th, had got through from Phayre's Division.

<sup>1</sup> St. John's telegram dated Kandahar, August 26th. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Hills's *Bombay Field Force*, p. 42.

No one in Kandahar doubted that the Government and the Military Authorities were straining every nerve to put an end to their isolation, but the uncertainty as to when help would reach them was very trying to men oppressed with heavy duties performed in excessive heat, living under insanitary conditions, and unable to obtain fresh vegetable food ; and, in consequence, the wounded made slow progress towards recovery, and the general health of the troops declined till there came to be 696 cases in hospital, made up as follows :—

	<i>Sick.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>
European troops . . . . .	187	86
Native troops . . . . .	340	83
	—	—
Total . . . . .	527	169

Great therefore was the joy of all members of the garrison when, soon after mid-day of the 27th of August, the flash of a heliograph announced the approach of friends, and Primrose's question, "Who are you?" was answered by the words, "The Advanced Guard of General Roberts's force—General Gough with two regiments of Cavalry."<sup>1</sup>

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. Hills's plan for the sortie of the 16th of August shows a thorough understanding of the nature of the intended operation—Brooke's, a complete misunderstanding of its character. All the proposals of the one made for secrecy, speed, and unity of action; all the arrangements of the other for publicity, delay, and division, with its natural consequence—loss of power. Every word, every act of Brooke, from the insisting on a preliminary bombardment to the message announcing that his position in Deh Kwaja was untenable, proves that he failed to see that an operation directed to the attainment

<sup>1</sup> "Old Memories." by Sir Hugh Gough. *Pall Mall Magazine*, April, 1899, p. 540.

of some specific object—the capture of certain guns, the destruction of certain works, the dispersion of a certain force, success to be followed by immediate retirement—must be conducted on different lines from an operation which aims at the permanent occupation of the whole, or a part, of an enemy's position.

The annals of most sieges offer examples of successful sorties; but Brooke need not have gone further back than the former Afghan War to learn the principles on which they should be founded. When, on the 11th of March, 1842, the Afghans opened fire on Jellalabad from a sangar, which they had thrown up during the night, and at the same time a report was brought in that they had begun to undermine the walls, a strong party of infantry and cavalry and two hundred Sappers and Miners, under Colonel Dennis, issued, without any preliminary bombardment, from the Peshawar Gate. Protected by the fire of all the guns on the ramparts, this force seized and destroyed the sangar, and having ascertained that there was no truth in the story of a mine, regained the city without the loss of a man. Three weeks later, when a second sortie was made—this time for the purpose of procuring food—and five hundred sheep and goats were swept away from the enemy's covering parties, there was again no preliminary bombardment, and success was once more due to the unexpectedness, suddenness, and unity of the operation.

A third sortie, with no less an aim than the dispersion of the enemy and the putting an end to the siege, conformed to the rules, which experience has imposed on this kind of operation, inasmuch as it was not preceded by a bombardment and was kept, after one quickly rectified deviation from Havelock's plan, strictly to a single line of advance, along which the attacking force, in case of need, would have fallen back upon the fortress, not in weak fragments, but as a formidable whole.

OBSERVATION II. There can be no doubt that General Primrose

was unequal to the important position which he held at Kandahar in the summer of 1880; but the responsibility for his failure does not rest with him. The hardships and anxieties of the previous year, when he had been in command of Sir Donald Stewart's communications, had told upon his health, and when called upon to be that officer's successor, a painful disease was undermining his mental and bodily powers. He made no secret of his reluctance to undertake fresh and more onerous responsibilities—few officers would have had the courage to refuse an appointment in the Field—and the Government of India was not ignorant of his failing health, which had been brought to their notice by an officer on the Head-Quarters Staff; but the Military Authorities in England demanded that, to remove the slight put upon the British Army by the appointment of three officers belonging to the Indian Army to the principal commands in the first phase of the war, the command in Southern Afghanistan should now go to Primrose, and to Primrose, accordingly, it was given; and this, notwithstanding that there was an alternative choice, for General Maude and General Bright, both belonging to the Home Army, were ready to their hand in India. To neutralize any bad effects that might be expected to flow from putting a weak man in a position which called for an exceptionally strong one, the new commander was given an excellent Staff—no General could have desired a better Assistant Adjutant-General than Major Burnett, a better Assistant Quartermaster-General than Major Adam, a better Commanding Royal Engineer than Lieutenant-Colonel Hills—but, as the Duke of Wellington once pointed out, when a similar mistake was being perpetrated by the Indian Government of his day, the best of Staffs cannot make amends to an army for the incapacity of its Head.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Governor-General appoints a Commander-in-Chief to the expedition and 'does so without fear of failure, although he knows his incapacity, as he says he sends with him a good Adjutant-General and a good Quartermaster-General and a good army. But he is mistaken if he supposes that a good high-



So long as there were only routine duties to perform, things went smoothly enough ; but the moment there came to be pressing dangers to guard against, and decisions calling for a clear head and strong will to take and act upon, Primrose, unable to form an independent judgment and surrounded by men of opposing views, sided first with one and then with another, and, in the end, tried to escape responsibility by leaving everything to Brooke, a man of courage and energy, but of little experience or wisdom.

The moral of the whole unpleasant story is the old one—that in the making of appointments, public interests should always override private and sectional susceptibilities ; and that when care has been taken to put the best men in important positions, they should be left free to act on their own views of what a complicated and ever changing situation may demand of them. With a Nott in command in Southern Afghanistan, there would have been no expedition to the Helmand, or, if an expedition to the Helmand, then no Maiwand disaster and no siege of Kandahar.

spirited army can be kept in order by other means than by the abilities and firmness of the Commander-in-Chief.' ” (Maxwell's *Life of Wellington*, p. 21, sixth edition.)

## CHAPTER XXXV

### Measures for the Relief of Kandahar

MARCH OF SIR FREDERICK ROBERTS

UNTROUBLED by fears as to the safety of the Force which he knew to be keeping a watch on Ayub Khan's movements, Sir Donald Stewart spent the latter half of the month of July in perfecting the arrangements for the withdrawal of his troops from Kabul. A large number of sick and wounded soldiers and camp-followers had already been passed on by the staging system to Peshawar, and two batteries of artillery, many stores, and much baggage and ammunition were on their way to India. There was no opposition to the retrograde movement, except between Jellalabad and Dakka, where the rafts, which had again been brought into use on the Kabul River, were fired on, and this annoyance was put an end to by the occupation of Fort Girdah, on the left bank of that stream.

In continuance of the process of freeing the force at Kabul of all elements of weakness, a sick convoy of three hundred and fifty-one Europeans, in charge of Surgeon-Major J. Fleming, left Kabul on the 27th of July, followed, the next day, by a second, consisting of four hundred and ninety-three Native troops and followers under Surgeon-Major G. Farrell. So satisfactorily were these preparatory measures being carried out that, on the 27th, Stewart noted in his Diary that all arrangements for making a start about the 10th of August were being completed, adding, with that curious tendency to distrust good fortune which is so marked a feature of human nature,

"I can hardly believe that we are to get out of this country without trouble, and yet everything looks bright and promising at this moment." Next day, the news of Burrows's defeat at Maiwand was telegraphed from Simla to Kabul, where it was received with deep anxiety and concern.<sup>1</sup> "This is the worst misfortune that can happen to us here," wrote Sir Donald to his wife. "It is impossible to say how Abdur Rahman will take it!"<sup>2</sup>

So far as Abdur Rahman was concerned, Stewart's anxiety was soon relieved. That politic Prince had no desire to put obstacles in the way of the British retirement from his kingdom, nor yet to play into the hands of his most formidable rival, Ayub Khan; so he continued to keep the peace in the territories over which he had control, and in an interview with Mr. Lepel Griffin showed himself animated by a sincere desire to be on cordial terms with the Indian Government.

The British Political Officer and the Amir met on the morning of the 31st of July, at Zimma, about sixteen miles north of Kabul. Griffin, who, with Stewart, had spent the night in Charles Gough's camp at Killa Haji, had for his escort a squadron of the 9th Lancers, of the 3rd Bengal Cavalry, and of the 3rd Punjab Cavalry; but Gough, fearing a sudden outbreak of fanaticism on the part of some of Abdur Rahman's wild followers, placed two companies of the 4th Gurkhas in a retired spot about a mile from the appointed place of meeting, and held his whole force, which had been strengthened by the Guide Corps and a Field Battery, in readiness to go to the

<sup>1</sup> Telegram dated 28th July, 1880.

From Lieutenant A. M. Muir, Kandahar.

To Foreign Secretary, Simla.

"Total defeat and dispersion of General Burrows's Force. Heavy loss in both officers and men. General Primrose has vacated cantonments and brought all his troops into Citadel. Officers and men returning in small parties. Wali has arrived. Colonel St. John safe."

Repeated to Sir Donald Stewart.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 372.

rescue should anything untoward occur. Abdur Rahman, on his side, appeared accompanied by two or three hundred horsemen and several thousand footmen ; but the latter halted half a mile from the durbar tent, which had been pitched on a hill, and stood out a conspicuous object, carefully watched by distrustful British and Afghan eyes.

Mr. Lepel Griffin was very favourably impressed by the new Amir, whom he described as having "an exceedingly intelligent face, brown eyes, a pleasant smile, and a frank, courteous manner ; by far the most prepossessing of all the Barakzai Sirdars whom I have met." His conversation, too, was marked by "good sense and sound political judgment," and though "his expectations were larger than the Indian Government was prepared to satisfy, he did not press them with discourteous insistence."<sup>1</sup> It was Griffin's wish that the Amir should visit Sir Donald Stewart in Gough's camp, and at the conclusion of the interview he left Mr. J. Christie behind to see if the matter could be arranged.<sup>2</sup> There was no difficulty on the Amir's side ; but, on consulting his followers, only the Kohistanis were ready to give their consent to the proposal. The Ghilzais and others, remembering the seizure, imprisonment, and deportation of Yahiya Khan and other Sirdars after Roberts's first durbar, were vehemently opposed to their ruler trusting himself within a British camp, and swore to leave him to his fate if he persisted in his design. Uninfluenced by their fears, the Amir tried to overcome their opposition by assuring them that the meeting with Stewart would take place on their side of the pass which separated the two forces, though, at the same time,

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> "The most prominent members of my Staff at this critical time were Sir F. Cunningham, my Chief-Assistant, and Mr. James Christie, Head of the Secret Intelligence Department, to whose brilliant services and accurate knowledge of Afghan character, the accession of Amir Abdur Rahman and the peaceful withdrawal of our armies from Afghanistan were largely due." (*"Afghanistan and the Indian Frontier."* Article by Sir Lepel Griffin in the *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1901.)

he was writing privately to Griffin that he was ready to come into Gough's camp, irrespective of the wishes of the people.<sup>1</sup> No doubt he would have been as good as his word, had not Stewart declined a visit that could only be paid "by deceiving those who were opposed to it,"<sup>2</sup> and returned to Kabul, where a double task awaited him, for the Government of India had fallen in with his strongly held opinion that, in view of the physical and climatic difficulties presented by the Bolan route, the beleaguered garrison of Kandahar could be best relieved from Kabul, and had sanctioned the despatch of the Force which he had begun to organize within a few hours of receiving the news of Burrows's defeat.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Donald could himself have taken the command of that Force, but with singular self-abnegation and generosity he chose as his own the inglorious and harassing duty of carrying out the evacuation of Northern Afghanistan, and gave the opportunity of winning honour and popularity to the old friend whom he had unwillingly superseded. Thanks to tact on the one side and loyalty on the other, that supersession had in no way disturbed the good relations long existing between Stewart and Roberts, and the two men were now able to work together in perfect harmony.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "If you really wish me to come to you irrespective of the opinion of the people, I am quite ready to do so. Please let me know your wishes."—*Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> "Making preparations for sending a force to Kandahar *via* Ghazni. . . . Everything must give way to the military necessities of the case." (*Ibid.* p. 376, Diary of 29th of July.)

<sup>4</sup> "General Stewart might have taken the command himself, but he considered that he would be doing a service to General Roberts to give him the command, which he accordingly did. General Stewart came to my hut that day and told me what he had done." (Extract from a Note by the Rev. T. J. L. Warneford. See *Sir D. Stewart's Life*, p. 389.)

Stewart's conduct on this occasion recalls Outram's great act of self-abnegation—the waiving of his right to command the Lucknow Relief Column in favour of Havelock.—H. B. H.



Generous in the choice of a commander for the Kandahar Column, Stewart was equally generous in all that concerned its constitution and equipment. It was to consist of ten thousand men, and Stewart bade Roberts choose his own corps and take all the best of the transport for their use.<sup>1</sup>

Two conflicting considerations governed Sir Frederick Roberts in his choice of troops—the wish to do honour to men who had been with him from the beginning, and a sense of the wisdom of eliminating, as far as possible, the Pathan element from a force which would have to operate against the Pathan army of Ayub Khan.<sup>2</sup> In the end, all the regiments still at Kabul which had formed part of his original Division, with the exception of

F-A Royal Horse Artillery,  
G-3 Royal Artillery,  
No. 1 Mountain Battery,  
67th Foot,  
Guide Corps,  
5th Punjab Infantry,  
28th Punjab Infantry,  
7th Company Sappers and Miners,

were included in the relieving column, which was brought up to its allotted strength by selections from Gough's and Hills's Brigades, that marched into Sherpur, the one on the 4th, the other on the 5th of August.

The Horse Artillery and Field Artillery were left behind in accordance with the decision that wheeled carriage should not accompany the column. Mountain guns might seem feeble weapons to oppose to Ayub Khan's heavy cannon—Sir F. Haines had doubts of the wisdom of trusting entirely to them—but Stewart knew that

<sup>1</sup> He "placed unreservedly at Sir F. Roberts's disposal the entire resources of the North Afghanistan Field Force, in transport and equipment." (Lieutenant-Colonel Chapman in *Royal United Service Magazine*, 1881, Vol. XXV, No. CX, p. 284.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 287.

mobility and striking power were the qualities most essential to the relieving column; expected that, once in touch with Kandahar, it would have the co-operation of Primrose's artillery; and was convinced that no fighting of importance need be looked for on the march, as the Ghilzais had not yet recovered from their defeat at Ahmed Khel, and Abdur Rahman had undertaken to send with Roberts an energetic and trustworthy Sirdar to arrange for the collection of supplies, and to nominate a Governor for Ghazni in place of Alam Khan, who, distrustful of his new sovereign, had quitted his post and withdrawn to Kabul.<sup>1</sup>

The Force as finally organized was constituted as follows:—

#### PERSONAL STAFF.

Major G. T. Pretymen, Aide-de-Camp.  
Lieutenant J. Sherston, Aide-de-Camp.  
Captain R. Pole-Carew, Orderly Officer.  
Captain the Hon. W. C. Rowley, Orderly Officer.  
Surgeon J. F. Williamson.

#### DIVISIONAL STAFF.

Lieutenant-Colonel E. F. Chapman, Chief of the Staff.  
Deputy Surgeon-General J. Hanbury, Principal Medical Officer.  
Major A. R. Badcock, Principal Commissariat Officer.  
Captain A. T. S. A. Rind, Commissariat Department.  
Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Low, Chief Director of Transport.  
Captain W. A. Wynter, Transport Department.  
Major C. A. Gorham, Deputy Judge-Advocate-General.  
Major C. Cowie, Commissary of Ordnance.  
Lieutenant W. G. Small, in charge of Field Treasure Chest.  
Reverend J. W. Adams, Chaplain Church of England.  
Reverend G. W. Manson, Presbyterian Chaplain.  
Very Reverend Father G. Browne, Roman Catholic Chaplain.

#### POLITICAL STAFF.

Major E. G. B. Hastings, Chief Political Officer.  
Captain J. W. Ridgeway, Assistant Political Officer.  
Major C. B. Euan Smith, Assistant Political Officer.  
Major M. Protheroe, Assistant Political Officer.

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 53.

## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

## ROYAL ENGINEERS.

Colonel Æ. Perkins, Commanding.  
Lieutenant T. P. Cather, Adjutant.

## ROYAL ARTILLERY.

Colonel A. C. Johnson, Commanding.  
Lieutenant R. A. Bannatine, Orderly Officer.  
Captain H. Pipon, Adjutant Royal Artillery.

## BATTERIES.

6-8 Royal Artillery (Mountain Battery), Major T. Graham.  
11-9 Royal Artillery (Mountain Battery), Major J. M. Douglas.  
No. 2 Mountain Battery, Major G. Swinley.

## CAVALRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General Hugh Gough, Commanding.  
Captain H. Burnley, Orderly Officer.  
Lieutenant M. O. Little, Orderly Officer.  
Captain J. P. Brabazon, Brigade-Major.  
Major B. A. Combe, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Captain C. F. Call, Field Engineer.  
Surgeon-Major R. Lewer.

*Regiments.*

9th Lancers, Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Bushman.  
3rd Bengal Cavalry, Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. D. Mackenzie.  
3rd Punjab Cavalry, Major A. Vivian.  
Central India Horse, Lieutenant-Colonel C. Martin.

## DIVISIONAL STAFF OF INFANTRY DIVISION.

Major-General J. Ross, Commanding.  
Captain J. D. Mansel, Aide-de-Camp.  
Lieutenant A. Davidson, Orderly Officer.  
Lieutenant the Hon. M. G. Talbot, Orderly Officer.  
Lieutenant F. B. Longe, Orderly Officer.  
Major G. de C. Morton, Assistant Adjutant-General.  
Major R. G. Kennedy, Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Deputy Surgeon-General J. Ekin.

1ST INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General H. T. Macpherson, Commanding.  
Lieutenant E. S. E. Childers, Orderly Officer.  
Captain R. E. C. Jarvis, Brigade-Major.  
Captain A. D. M'Gregor, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Captain R. P. Tickell, Field Engineer.  
Surgeon-Major S. B. Roe.  
Surgeon-Major W. Finden.

*Regiments.*

92nd Highlanders, Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Parker.  
23rd Pioneers, Lieutenant-Colonel H. Collett.  
24th Punjab Infantry, Colonel F. B. Norman.  
2nd Gurkhas, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Battye.

2ND INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General T. D. Baker, Commanding.  
Captain M. N. G. Kane, Orderly Officer.  
Captain W. C. Farwell, Brigade-Major.  
Lieutenant F. T. N. Spratt, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Captain W. G. Nicholson, Field Engineer.  
Surgeon-Major G. W. M'Nalty.  
Surgeon-Major C. A. Atkins.

*Regiments.*

72nd Highlanders, Lieutenant-Colonel F. Brownlow.  
2nd Sikhs, Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Boswell.  
3rd Sikhs, Lieutenant-Colonel G. Noel Money.  
5th Gurkhas, Lieutenant-Colonel A. FitzHugh.

3RD INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General C. M. Macgregor, Commanding.  
Captain H. M'L. Hutchinson, Orderly Officer.  
Captain R. Chalmer, Brigade-Major.  
Captain A. Gaselee, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.  
Captain M. C. Brackenbury, Field Engineer.  
Surgeon-Major G. C. Chesneye.  
Surgeon-Major E. C. Markey.

*Regiments.*

2-60th Rifles, Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Collins.  
15th Sikhs, Lieutenant-Colonel G. R. Hennessy.

4th Gurkhas, Lieutenant-Colonel F. F. Roweroft.  
25th Punjab Infantry, Colonel J. W. Hoggan.

Total strength: 274 British officers, 2,562 British non-commissioned officers and men, 7,151 Native officers, non-commissioned officers, and men,<sup>1</sup> 7,820 camp-followers,<sup>2</sup> and 18 guns.

A searching medical examination weeded out from the above corps every man who did not come up to a high standard of health and strength, and the scale of baggage and tents was reduced to a minimum.<sup>3</sup> The transport, chosen with equal care, inclusive of carriage for footsore soldiers and followers, consisted of eight thousand two hundred and fifty-five ponies, mules, and donkeys; the only camels being six assigned to the service of the hospital.<sup>4</sup> The crops having been just harvested, and the presence of the Amir's deputy ensuring that there would be comparatively little difficulty

<sup>1</sup> Total of all ranks, 9,987. These figures were subsequently slightly increased by the discharge of sick men from hospital. (Chapman.)

Sir Donald Stewart in his march from Kandahar to Kabul in the spring of the same year had only 7,249 of all ranks. See, Chapter XXVI.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> 6,576 public and 1,244 private followers.

<sup>3</sup> British soldiers were each allowed for kit and camp equipage, including greatcoat and waterproof . . . . . 30 lbs.  
Native soldiers . . . . . 20 „  
Public and private followers . . . . . 10 „  
Each European officer . . . . . 1 mule.  
Every eight officers for mess . . . . . 1 „  
Each Native officer . . . . . 30 lbs.  
Each Staff-officer for office purposes . . . . . 80 „

<sup>4</sup> Afghan ponies, 1,589; Indian ponies, 1,244; mules, 4,510; and donkeys, 912.

“To enable General Roberts's Division to move on Kandahar with pony and mule transport only, the regiments were supplied with the mules of General Hills's Division, which received camels in their place. The Kabul General Transport also contributed pack animals, thoroughly equipped, with the best saddles . . . leaving me . . . with the refuse, that is ponies and yaboes, which had been recently for the most part received from the infirmary, and had not had time to recover condition.” (Report by Major Charles Hayter, Director Kabul Transport, dated 2nd September, 1880.)



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in getting the people to part with a portion of their store, the only supplies carried were—

## FOR BRITISH TROOPS.

Bread Stuff for 5 days . . . . .	} In hands of victualling Agent.
Preserved Vegetables for 15 days . . . . .	
Tea, sugar, salt for 30 days . . . . .	
Rum for 30 days . . . . .	

## FOR NATIVE TROOPS AND FOLLOWERS.

Flour for 5 days . . . . .	} In regimental charge.
Dhal and salt for 30 days . . . . .	
Eight issues of rum for spirit-drinking men.	

In addition, the Force took with it a ten days' supply of sheep for British, and four issues for Native troops, with twenty per cent. to spare. A small quantity of lime juice, pea soup, and tinned meat was in charge of the Commissariat officer accompanying each Brigade.<sup>1</sup> But if the amount of food stuffs deemed essential was small, the quantity of ammunition taken was, under the circumstances, large, namely, two hundred rounds of small ammunition for every Infantry soldier—seventy rounds carried by each man, thirty in reserve, and a hundred in the Field Park—and for each Mountain Battery, five hundred and forty rounds, made up as follows :—

Common shell . . . . .	264
Double shell . . . . .	60
Shrapnel shell . . . . .	144
Star shell . . . . .	24
Case shell . . . . .	48

and thirty rounds per gun in the Field Park.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report by Major A. R. Badcock, Principal Commissariat Officer, Kabul-Kandahar Field Force. Some 5,000 sheep were purchased on the march. (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 341.)

At any other season of the year a much larger amount of supplies, baggage, and tent equipage must have been carried; and, probably, double the number of transport animals would have been required.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 344.

Thanks to Roberts's and Chapman's energy and knowledge, every detail of the equipment of the Kandahar Relief Column was completed in little more than a week ; and on Sunday, the 8th of August, the troops composing it turned their backs on the city and cantonment where many of them had spent the most eventful months of their lives, and entered on the march which was to make their Commander's reputation. The Logar Valley route had been selected in preference to the shorter road running through the less fertile Maidan Valley, and the Cavalry Brigade pushed on to Charasiab ; the First and Third Brigades, with which were Sir Frederick Roberts and his Staff, halting at Ben-i-Hissar ; and the Second at Indaki. In the afternoon, Sir Donald Stewart rode out to Roberts's camp to bid him farewell and to take his last look at the troops, whose appearance must have filled him with the satisfaction of knowing that, so far as circumstances would permit, it was a thoroughly well-organized force that he was sending out to carry deliverance to the hard-pressed garrison of Kandahar, and few but his own immediate Staff knew what sacrifices he had made to ensure its efficiency.<sup>1</sup>

With those sacrifices Stewart's responsibility for this portion of the army which had been under his command since the beginning of May came to an end, for both he and the Viceroy had given Roberts a free hand. On one point only was the power of the Commander of the Kabul-Kandahar Force restricted. Fully determined that there should be no repetition of the executions and destruction of villages which had brought disgrace on the British occupation of Kabul, Lord Ripon withheld from Roberts and his political officers all jurisdiction over the Wali's mutinous soldiers and rebellious subjects,

<sup>1</sup> "I am giving Bobs nine regiments of Infantry, while I had only seven ; and he will have three European regiments of Infantry to my two, and the 9th Lancers in addition. He will also have two Gurkha and two Sikh regiments ; so his force in fighting power will be nearly twice as strong as my Division, good though it was. Still, it is only fair to give him the best of everything, and risk as little as possible." (*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 375.)

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and gave the former distinctly to understand that he must confine himself to the dispersal of those actually in arms against the British Government.

Sir D. Stewart's expectation that the memory of their defeat at Ahmed Khel would keep the Ghilzais quiet, proved well-founded,<sup>1</sup> and thanks to the exertions of the Amir's official, Sirdar Mahomed Azir Khan, who accompanied the force to Ghazni, Roberts, up to that point, had none of the ordinary supply difficulties to contend with; yet, notwithstanding these advantages, the arduous nature of the undertaking on which he and his troops embarked soon became apparent. The days were very hot, the nights bitterly cold;<sup>2</sup> the marches long, with the exception of the first, as will be seen from the following table:—

## 1ST STAGE.

March 1.	August 8th.	Sherpur to Ben-i-Hissar . . .	5 miles.
„ 2.	„ 9th.	Ben-i-Hissar to Zaidabad . . .	16 „
„ 3.	„ 10th.	Zaidabad to Zargan Shahr . . .	13 „
„ 4.	„ 11th.	Zargan Shahr to Padkao Rozan . . .	16½ „
„ 5.	„ 12th.	Padkao Rozan to Amir Killa . . .	10½ „
„ 6.	„ 13th.	Amir Killa to Takia . . .	12 „
„ 7.	„ 14th.	Takia to Shashgao . . .	17 „
„ 8.	„ 15th.	Shashgao to Ghazni . . .	12½ „

Total Distance . . . 102½

Daily Average 12¾ miles.

Water was often scarce, and, though there was no lack of food, the camp-followers, frequently on foot by 2.30 a.m., were too tired out in the evening to cook their rations, and just kept themselves alive

<sup>1</sup> "This fact made the march of Sir Frederick Roberts's force—unmolested en route—a certainty." (General Chapman. See, *Life of Sir D. Stewart*, p. 336.)

<sup>2</sup> "The nights, even in August, were at this elevation bitterly cold, and the cavalry, who marched about 5 a.m., were cloaked up to the first three or four hours." (*Leaves from the Diary of a Soldier*, by Lieutenant-General Sir M. G. Gerard, K.C.B., p. 298.)

on raw flour or Indian corn,<sup>1</sup> whilst the desertion of the Afghan drivers imposed unexpected work upon the troops, many of whom, after months of inaction, were in poor condition for hard marching.<sup>2</sup> Heat, thirst, improper food, irregular meals, and ill-fitting boots, soon produced their natural results—dyspepsia, bilious vomiting, diarrhoea, sore feet—and, as men and followers fell out, the strain on the dhoolie-bearers, always a weak part of an Indian Army's equipment, grew ever greater.<sup>3</sup>

The order of march was much the same from day to day. The *réveillé* sounded long before daylight and the troops were in motion before 4.30 a.m., sometimes earlier.<sup>4</sup> Two Cavalry regiments, five or six miles in advance of the main body, led the way, stretching across whatever valley they might be passing through, and carefully searching every inch of ground for a possible hidden foe. Then followed two Infantry Brigades with the Artillery; behind these came the baggage, flanked by the two remaining Cavalry regiments—the Central Indian Horse sent up from the line of communications joined the Division at Zaidabad—and the Third Infantry Brigade, with a squadron of cavalry attached, brought up the rear. Each afternoon a party, commanded by an officer, went out from the new encamping ground to reconnoitre four or five miles ahead.

<sup>1</sup> "These remarks equally apply to the Gurkhas, who also cook their own food. To this deprivation may be ascribed a large amount of the inefficiency resulting from dyspepsia and bowel affections." (Deputy Surgeon-General Hanbury's Diary, Appendix No. V., *Army Medical Report for 1879*, Vol. XXI.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "One of the weakest points of a force operating in India is at all times the sick carriage composed of dhoolie-bearers, and on the occasion of the Kabul-Kandahar march this was a special source of anxiety, owing to the strain to which the dhoolie-bearers had been subjected." (Special Report by Surgeon-General T. Crawford. See Appendix No. III., *Army Medical Report for 1880*, Vol. XXII.)

<sup>4</sup> "Up at 3. Off at 4. This is a mistake. The animals get loaded in the dark and are loaded badly, and practically at 4 you cannot see an inch, so you do not really get off till 4.30." (*Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 240.)

The Zamburak Pass, which was crossed on the sixth day, was the only serious physical obstacle met with between Kabul and Ghazni. The mountain over which it runs rises some fifteen hundred—some authorities say eighteen hundred—feet above the valley on its northern side, and is very steep, the gradient in many places one in four. To cross it under the most favourable circumstances would be no light matter for an army, but coming at the end of a ten-mile march under a scorching sun it broke down many of the transport animals<sup>1</sup> and their drivers, most of whom had to wait for hours at its foot for their turn to enter upon the ascent,<sup>2</sup>—the path was so narrow that the cavalry had to cross in single file, officers and men alike leading their horses—and the whole operation was so slow that the Second Brigade, which was on rear-guard duty, had to bivouack on scanty rations, as its tents and baggage could not be got over till the next morning.

The seventh march offered ample compensation for the fatigues of the sixth, for the Chinaz Valley, on the southern side of the Zamburak Pass, was found to be rich in vegetables and fruit—grapes and melons—and what was of even greater value to thirsty men and beasts, it possessed an abundant supply of good water.<sup>3</sup> That evening at Shashgao, for the first time, the whole Division encamped close together on the extensive plain that lies at the foot of the Sher-i-Dahan Pass, the path across which, always easy, had been greatly improved by Stewart's engineers.<sup>4</sup> Next day, the 15th of August, the troops

<sup>1</sup> "It must be remembered what a transport animal has to go through. It is laden up in the dark, when it cannot possibly be taken out of camp and watered; it possibly does not reach camp till late in the afternoon, having had its load on its back from 10 to 15 hours, and these hours comprising all the heat of the day." (Report by Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Low, Chief Director of Transport, dated Kandahar, 6th September, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> Duke's *Recollections*, p. 342.

<sup>3</sup> Hanbury's Diary.

<sup>4</sup> "The Sher-i-Dahan might, from its name (the lion's mouth), be expected to be very formidable, whereas it is one of the easiest in Afghanistan. The rise from the Shashgao plain to the Kotal is only four hundred feet, and is so gradual that it is scarcely noticeable." (Hensman, p. 478.)



descended into a land of plenty. Far as the eye could reach fields were green with thick crops of Indian corn and lucerne ; ancient orchards surrounded the villages with belts of foliage, and in the numerous vineyards the vines were heavy with grapes of wonderful size and flavour.<sup>1</sup> The passage of the mountain had begun at 4 a.m., and at 9.30 the leading Brigade arrived before Ghazni. The people showed no signs of hostility, and when Roberts appeared, the Governor came out and tendered him the keys of the gates ; but the British Commander prudently posted guards inside and outside the city walls to prevent any collision between the troops and the inhabitants, and to ensure the prompt execution of his demand for supplies, in the collection of which he had, for the last time, the assistance of the Afghan official, for, beyond Ghazni, Abdur Rahman's authority did not as yet extend.

No news either from Khelat-i-Ghilzai or Kandahar awaited Roberts at Ghazni, and in his ignorance of the fate of the two garrisons, he did not feel justified in granting his Force so much as a day's rest at the end of the first stage of its long march ; but he did his best to mitigate the sufferings of the many sick and footsore followers by authorizing Colonel Low to purchase for their use all the donkeys he could lay hands on.

The second stage of the advance from Ghazni to Khelat-i-Ghilzai was again divided into eight marches, though the distance traversed was longer by thirty-two miles.

TABLE OF 2ND STAGE.

March 9.	August 16th.	Ghazni to Yarghalta . . .	20 miles.
„ 10.	„ 17th.	Yarghalta to Chardeh . . .	12 „
„ 11.	„ 18th.	Chardeh to Karez-i-Oba . . .	16½ „
„ 12.	„ 19th.	Karez-i-Oba to Mukur . . .	14 „

<sup>1</sup> "A donkey load, made up of two large baskets, each weighing 40 or 50 lbs., cost us only three rupees (5 shillings) . . . though prices rose enormously as the day wore on." (Hensman, pp. 478, 479.)

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March 13.	August 20th.	Mukur to Chasma-i-Panjak	. 21 miles
„ 14.	„ 21st.	Chasma-i-Panjak to Gajai .	18 „
„ 15.	„ 22nd.	Gajai to Baba Kazai .	16½ „
„ 16.	„ 23rd.	Baba Kazai to Khelat-i-Ghilzai .	16½ „
Total Distance . .			134½ „
Daily Average 16½ miles.			

A few miles outside Ghazni all signs of cultivation and human habitation ceased, and the troops entered on a waste, covered with camel-thorn scrub and intersected by deep ravines.<sup>1</sup> The hot, loose sand burned and slipped under foot, and though the men marched, for the most part, without accoutrements, and all, who could, walked and rode by turns, one animal doing duty for three men, many fell out.<sup>2</sup> Towards evening a blinding dust-storm sprang up, which so delayed the Brigade on rear-guard duty that it did not reach its encamping ground till 9 p.m., by which time the men had been seventeen hours under arms.<sup>3</sup> This trying march broke down many men and animals—at its close more donkeys had to be purchased—and it added to the heavy duties of the medical officers attached to the field hospitals, whose business it was to examine every morning all who reported themselves sick, decide who could, and who could not, be left to trudge along afoot, and see that suitable transport was provided for every non-effective—all this in darkness and bitter cold. The work of the cavalry also grew heavier from Ghazni onwards, for as the Sirdar Mahomed Aziz Khan, the Amir's agent, was no longer

<sup>1</sup> Hensman, p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> "Every baggage animal that could be so utilized was employed in aiding the weary and footsore and in bringing them into camp, but the apathy of despair led many a worn-out man of the Native following to refuse all exertion, and the duty of the rear-guard in pressing forward the stragglers was often arduous and painful." (Chapman, p. 296.)

"Of late the troops of cavalry forming the rear-guard have quartered the country like beaters at a tiger hunt, and the sleeping *kahars* have been rudely awakened and brought along." (Hensman, p. 485.)

<sup>3</sup> Hanbury's Diary.

with the Force, and Roberts would not permit any trenching on his reserve of supplies,<sup>1</sup> the flanking regiments had to go far and wide, penetrating into side valleys, ransacking deserted villages in search of the people's carefully hidden stores of grain, and, when unearthed, lading them on the three or four hundred animals by which they were accompanied.<sup>2</sup>

On the 17th of August, the Division crossed the battle-field of Ahmed Khel, where a shrine, raised to the memory of eleven hundred "martyrs," proved that Sir D. Stewart had not over-estimated the Ghilzai losses in that hard-fought action; and the same day, his forebodings as to the retribution which would overtake the Hazaras as soon as he and his force had passed out of sight, received full confirmation,<sup>3</sup> for near Chardeh, the second march out of Ghazni, the cavalry came upon a fortified Hazara village, the walls and roofs of which were crowded with men, women, and children. Some of the men came into camp and reported that the place had been besieged by the Afghans ever since General Stewart's departure from Ghazni, and that they were expecting to be starved out and put to the sword. From this fate they were now saved, for, under the temporary protection afforded them by Roberts's Force, the whole population fled that evening, and the inhabitants of Chardeh promptly burned down their abandoned houses. Whether the fugitives found permanent safety

<sup>1</sup> "Our plan from the first was, if possible, never to trench on the reserve of atta and sheep, and to buy ghee, grain, and forage for the day's consumption. . . . On one or two occasions we had to use a portion of our reserve, but at other places we made up for it again . . . and on no occasion throughout the march was a reduced issue of either atta or meat made." (Report dated Kandahar, 18th September, 1880, by Major A. R. Badcock, Principal Commissariat Officer.)

<sup>2</sup> *Leaves from the Diary of a Soldier and Sportsman*, by Sir Montagu Gerard, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> "Active hostilities had been proceeding for some months betwixt the two parties; the Shiahhs (Hazaras) being accused amongst other things of burning alive all the wounded Afghans left on the field after the fight at Ahmed Khel." (Ibid.)

among the hills to which they had retired may be doubted, for there was abundant evidence next day that Afghan vengeance could follow them up. "Being on flanking duty," writes Sir Montagu Gerard, in his *Leaves from the Diary of a Soldier*, "on the day we marched from Ahmed Khel, and the spurs of the mountains being open and undulating, we were able to penetrate some miles into Karabagh (Hazara territory). Never did I see such a scene of desolation, and the devastation was apparently of very recent date. There was the mark of fire and sword everywhere, not a roof-tree left to a homestead, not the trace of a living creature, and even the fruit trees were barked or cut down."<sup>1</sup>

The flight of the Hazara villagers had unpleasant consequences for the Force, for many of its drivers belonged to that tribe, and these men, unable to resist so favourable an opportunity for deserting, joined their kinsfolk and disappeared with them. The same day, the urgent need of additional transport nearly led to a fight with a party of Powindahs, the great Afghan trading tribe.<sup>2</sup> These men had with them a hundred and fifty camels, which the transport department insisted on purchasing and, in the end, took by force, the owners having turned the creatures loose and hidden their saddles.<sup>3</sup> Along the line of advance from Ghazni to Mukur there was hardly any water or forage, and the variations of temperature were very great;<sup>4</sup> but at the latter place the Force struck the source of the Turnak, and from thence, for several marches, the extremes of heat and cold were less marked, and the road, which followed the river,

<sup>1</sup> Page 300.

<sup>2</sup> "They sell to the luxurious Mahomedans at Delhi the dried fruits of Bokhara, and buy at Calcutta English calico and muslin for the soft harems of Herat and the savage tribes of Turkestan." (Sir Charles Macgregor.)

<sup>3</sup> Hensman, p. 489.

<sup>4</sup> "The variations of temperature (at times as much as eighty degrees between day and night) was most trying to the troops, who had to carry the same clothes whether the thermometer was at freezing point at dawn or at 110° Fahr. at mid-day." (*Forty-One Years in India*, Vol. II. p. 349).

ran through fields of standing Indian corn, the heads of which were an excellent substitute for flour, and the stalks for hay.<sup>1</sup> Fuel was scarce everywhere, and at many places houses had to be pulled down for firewood ; and even this source of supply failed at times, as near some of the encamping grounds there were no villages to dismantle.<sup>2</sup>

Between Karez-i-Oba and Chasma-i-Panjak the three Infantry Brigades moved abreast, their flanks protected by the Cavalry. Marching was comparatively easy in this open country, and though the number of ineffectives continued to increase—the daily average on the sick-list from Ghazni onwards was five hundred and fifty fighting men and from a hundred and fifty to two hundred followers<sup>3</sup>—the ailments were mostly trivial—sore and blistered feet,<sup>4</sup> diarrhoea, and sun fever, or fatigue, pure and simple.

At Chasma-i-Panjak Sir Frederick Roberts received his first news from Southern Afghanistan, and the news, so far as it went, was good. Colonel Tanner wrote that the country round Khelat-i-Ghilzai was quiet and he and his troops safe and well, but he gave no information as to the state of things in Kandahar. Next day, however, at Shahjui, where heliographic communication with Khelat was established, he

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Low's and Major Badcock's Reports.

<sup>2</sup> "A fair price was invariably paid for the wood, and it was found that the inhabitants were, for the most part, willing to sell their houses." (Chapman, p. 293.)

As a rule few of the owners were present to be consulted, and people with winter at hand do not willingly submit to their houses being stripped of their roofs, especially where material for re-roofing is scarce.—H. B. H.

<sup>3</sup> Deputy Surgeon-General Hanbury's Report.

<sup>4</sup> "Probably a worse-shod army never took the field. The ammunition boot, made of raw material, and of very indifferent workmanship, loses shape and turns over at the heel on one side or the other, after a few days' hard marching, and simply impedes progress. The Native shoe, with its wide-open mouth and narrow-pointed toes, seems ingeniously contrived to cripple and blister. . . . I am of opinion, taken all round, the wide-soled ammunition boot is best adapted for both European and Native troops, but the material and workmanship must be improved, and decided attention to fitting is demanded." (Ibid.)



reported that Primrose had made a sortie in which many officers and men had been killed, but that the garrison was in good health and spirits, in no straits for food for men and followers, and had sufficient forage in hand for all animals to hold out till the arrival of a relieving force<sup>1</sup> should reopen the country to its foragers.

The letter containing this information written by Major Adam on the 17th of August, Colonel Tanner placed in Roberts's hands on the day of the latter's arrival at Khelat. It gave a full and unvarnished account of the sortie; but the writer followed up his admission of its failure by a passage which satisfied the General that the garrison was in no immediate danger, and decided him to give his troops a well-earned day's rest. "The enemy," so Adam wrote, "must, however, have seen that we have more fighting power in us, and we heard that the regular regiments under Ayub would not turn out to reinforce the village, so that an effect has been produced and the morale of our troops here is still good. The enemy here, I fancy, begin to think the game is up, and if they mean to assault they must do so within a day or two. We are very secure; the buildings round the walls have been mostly cleared away; abattis of trees, wire entanglement, chevaux-de-frise, traverses, flank defences, blue lights, shells, small mines in drains—all have been got ready; and if they do attack, it will be at a great loss of life to them."

Sir F. Roberts had been given no instructions as to the abandonment or retention of Khelat, and, being free to use his own judgment in the matter, he decided to withdraw the garrison, which he found to be equipped with all needful transport; and as the Governor, Sherindil Khan, declined to remain after the departure of the British troops, he handed back the fortress to Mahomed Sadik Khan, a Ghilzai Chief, who was its Governor when occupied by Sir D. Stewart in January, 1879.

<sup>1</sup> Sir F. Roberts's Despatch.

Thanks to the strong position and substantial defences of Khelat-i-Ghilzai, it would probably have been able to stand against any attack which might be made upon it; but Colonel Tanner's troops were far too few to admit of his taking the offensive should Ayub Khan attempt to slip past him by the Argandab route, lying some miles to the north of Khelat,<sup>1</sup> and as any military value which the place might have been supposed to possess as an outpost towards Ghazni and Kabul, had now disappeared, no reason remained for depriving Kandahar of the services of its garrison.

On the 25th of August, Roberts resumed his march, and, in the absence of all news as to Ayub Khan's dispositions and intentions, pushed on with the same rapidity as before to Robat, where, as was mentioned in the foregoing chapter, his vanguard entered into heliographic communication with Primrose; but before dealing with the third stage of the advance of the Northern Relief Force, the difficulties and movements of the troops which, all the time, had been struggling up to Kandahar from the south, must be described.

<sup>1</sup> Only cavalry and infantry could have moved by this route. Chapman says positively that "no doubt existed regarding the impossibility of moving wheeled artillery by the Argandab Valley." (See, *March from Kabul to Kandahar*, p. 299.)

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### March of General Phayre

WHEN the news of the Maiwand disaster reached Quetta, Sir Robert Sandeman, Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan, and General Phayre, commanding the troops on Primrose's line of communications, took counsel together as to the quickest and surest way of bringing relief to the garrison of Kandahar. Both were strong men, capable of subordinating a lesser interest to a greater, and they were of one mind as to the necessity of withdrawing from the Sibi-Thal-Chotiali-Gwal route to the Pishin Valley, though such withdrawal meant the abandonment and probable destruction of the railway ; for only by the concentration of every available man could they hope to collect a sufficient force to overcome the resistance which they knew they must expect to encounter. It was a sore trial to Sandeman to abandon a work in which he took so deep an interest, and to withdraw from territory over which he had just succeeded in establishing British influence ; but he saw the sacrifice must be made, and he made it without a moment's hesitation.<sup>1</sup> Nor was there any uncertainty on the part of the Indian Government, whose sanction to the resolution arrived at by Phayre and Sandeman was given in the following telegram to the latter officer :—

“Viceroy entirely approves of the measure proposed by yourself and General Phayre, and decides that the forces employed for protection of railway line must be at once withdrawn as proposed. We

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Robert Sandeman*, by Dr. Thornton, C.S.I., p. 152.

are sending reinforcements from Bengal and will reoccupy railway line when possible, but present exigencies necessitate pushing forward all available forces towards Kandahar. Viceroy relies on you to use all exertions to co-operate with Phayre in relieving posts and pushing forward reinforcements.”<sup>1</sup>

When all the posts along the railway line and the road connecting it with Quetta had been evacuated, there would be in Pishin seven Bombay infantry battalions and nine squadrons of cavalry, and as the 2nd Battalion of the 11th Foot and a Field Battery were on their way up, Phayre only asked, in addition, for one British regiment and one battery of artillery; but the Commander-in-Chief, with the sanction of Government, ordered up from Bengal one British and two Native infantry battalions, a field battery, and two regiments of cavalry, one British, the other Native, all which corps, fully equipped for field service, were to be railed *viâ* Sukkur to Sibi. A Madras infantry battalion and a cavalry regiment of the Hyderabad Contingent were to strengthen the communications; and, later, the 78th Highlanders, a European mountain battery, and a Native infantry regiment were sent up from Bombay.

General Phayre reported, on the 29th of July, that it would take him at least fifteen days to organize his force and equip it with transport; but over three weeks elapsed before he could begin his advance, for, clear-eyed as he was to the truth of the situation in which he found himself, he had not made sufficient allowance for the hindrances which hedged him in on every side. The heat in the desert and the Bolan Pass was appalling; floods had swept away miles of the Sukkur-Sibi railway, yet in Baluchistan and Kakar-land, where hardly any rain had fallen since the end of 1878, there was no forage for the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Robert Sandeman*, p. 152.

“Our trust is mainly in you and Phayre, who are both experienced and courageous frontier officers. I may say that Lord Ripon very highly appreciates your attitude and your energetic proceedings.” (Letter from Foreign Secretary. *Ibid.*)

cavalry horses and transport animals ; and the whole country, wakened into fierce life by the news of Ayub Khan's victory, was in arms—even the Marris, who, after sixteen years of fidelity to their engagements,<sup>1</sup> goaded into hostility by the occupation of their territories, had risen, and in conjunction with the Kakars were actively engaged in destroying the railway and its rolling stock, wrecking storehouses, engine sheds, and the bungalows of the superintending engineers, and attacking the working parties and coolies employed on the line.

On the 3rd of August, a large body of tribesmen fell on a convoy of carts near Dina Karez, killing three men of the escort and wounding three. On the 8th the Marris set upon a retiring party consisting of a hundred and eighty men, of whom a great number were sick, under Lieutenant F. T. Tobin, in charge of a thousand coolies, a large convoy of carts, and a lakh and a half (£15,000) of treasure. The scene of the attack—the Kudiali Pass, a long and, in parts, very narrow defile—was well chosen ; and though the troops fought bravely, a hundred and eighty carts and all baggage and treasure had to be abandoned, and four European officials, twelve men of the guard, and twenty coolies were killed, and Lieutenant Tobin and four sepoy wounded.<sup>2</sup>

North of Pishin matters were no better ; no post, no detachment of troops was safe, and communication with Chaman was, for a time, cut off by the Achakzais, who seized the Khojak Pass ; and though driven from it on the 2nd of August when its crest was occupied by two mountain guns, three hundred rifles, and twenty-five sappers, they continued hanging about in large numbers, and much brisk skirmishing went on in the defile and on the adjacent heights.

In the midst of this turmoil and trouble Phayre received the letter from Major Adam mentioned in a previous chapter. If its cheerful tone allayed his anxiety for the immediate safety of Kandahar, it stimulated his desire to bring speedy deliverance to that city's

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Robert Sandeman*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, pp. 42, 48.



gallant garrison; and he had nearly succeeded in completing his preparations for the advance of a Force strong enough to cope with Ayub Khan's large army and powerful artillery, when news reached him that two thousand Kakars and Zhobites had made a fierce attack on Kach-Amadan, an important post twenty-eight miles to the north-east of Quetta. The garrison, consisting of a wing of the 16th Bombay Infantry, some sappers and details of other corps, commanded by Colonel T. W. W. Pierce, beat off its assailants and pursued them for ten miles, killing eighty of their number, but not without itself suffering serious loss—two men and twenty-five followers killed, and one officer, eight men, and six followers wounded. Undaunted by the severe punishment inflicted on them, the tribesmen, returning in great numbers, seized the heights above the entrenchments and compelled Phayre, who knew that Kach-Amadan was full of non-effectives, to send off a flying column to its relief.<sup>1</sup> Alarmed by the approach of this force, which consisted of two mountain guns, three troops of cavalry, and an infantry regiment, the tribal gathering broke up, and the sick were brought into Quetta on the 21st of August. Phayre was deeply sensible of the disadvantage of holding a number of small posts, which, from their situation, could contribute nothing to the attainment of his immediate object. "These isolated posts, far from the line of communication, are most objectionable in a military point of view," so he complained on the 20th of August, "as they alienate men and animals that cannot be spared;" and a day or two earlier, he had telegraphed to Army Head-Quarters that, in consequence of the attitude of the Marri, he had already alienated more troops for Sibi and Bolan than had ever been the case before, thus crippling his advance force; yet, Sir Robert Sandeman was asking for more troops, which he could not possibly give without stopping the advance on Kandahar.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Besides his own wounded, Pierce had in his charge all the sick brought in from Chappar, Thal, Chotiali, and other abandoned posts.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, pp. 53, 55.

It is impossible not to sympathize with the suppressed irritation perceptible in this telegram ; but Sandeman also was in a labyrinth of difficulties, and might well be of the opinion that the preservation intact of the line of communication with Quetta was essential to the advance which Phayre was burning to begin. All the railway stations on the Sukkur-Sibi line were menaced by bodies of marauders, and every post from Sibi to Quetta, at one time or another, was in jeopardy. Many coolies and railway employés had been massacred on their way to the plains, and those that escaped death had been pursued up to the very pickets round the Sibi Dépôt. The authorities in India were doing their utmost to send up reinforcements and supplies, but the result of their efforts was to make confusion worse confounded. At Sibi there was no order, no organization. Day by day, trains shot out hundreds of men and tons upon tons of military stores and food stuffs, to be carried on by raw ponies and bullocks, which, for the most part, had never before had a load upon their backs.<sup>1</sup> Sick and giddy with hours, often days, of travelling in crowded railway carriages, the men had, at all costs, to be hurried forward into the Bolan, for delay in the desert in August meant death ; but between Sibi and Dadur at the mouth of the pass lay eighteen miles of hot, heavy sand, and though attempts were made to lighten the European soldiers' sufferings by providing them with carts, the wretched bullocks drawing them crawled so slowly that to reach their camping ground before the sun was dangerously high, the men had to get down and stagger along on foot. In

<sup>1</sup> " Amidst the general hurry and confusion prevailing, the Sibi dépôt was . . . a chaos of military stores, commissariat supplies, transport animals, etc., and the unfortunate officers and men had to hunt for all their requirements in an atmosphere in which, under any other circumstances, a European would have thought he was risking his life by merely exposing himself to the sun, and more than one succumbed in consequence before he had even commenced his march." (" The March to Quetta in August, 1880," by Mr. C. E. Biddulph, Assistant Political Officer. See, *United Service Magazine*, July, 1894.)

the Bolan there was less exposure to the direct rays of the sun, but the atmosphere, oppressive throughout, was in some of the narrower portions almost insupportable;<sup>1</sup> and behind the troops as they advanced, the road was strewn with baggage and stores of which unruly animals had divested themselves, or under the weight of which exhausted animals had sunk down to die. "Indeed," to use the words of Mr. C. E. Biddulph, "after the completion of the first three or four marches it may be said that the *impedimenta* of the troops consisted of barely more than the clothes they had on and the cartridges in their pouches." Many died on the march of fatigue, many at the end of it in consequence of the sudden change from heat to cold, aggravated by insufficient food; for Quetta, poorly provisioned, was unable to meet the demands of the new-comers, and troops and followers alike had to be put on half-rations.<sup>2</sup> ✓

As weeks passed without bringing news of the relief of Kandahar, the attitude of the local population grew more openly hostile, and it was not without cause that old Alla Deena, the Chief of the Brahuis, who "by placing their camels at our disposal had thrown in their lot with us," began to doubt what the end might be. "Pray God, Sahib, that Kandahar may soon be relieved, or it will be a bad day for me as well as for you," were words frequently on his lips when he came to Biddulph's camp for news, only to hear that there was none to give him.<sup>3</sup>

As an old frontier officer, versed in all tribal ways, General Phayre knew quite as well as Alla Deena that the conduct of the people in his rear depended on the success or failure of the efforts to raise the siege of Kandahar, and this knowledge and the news of the unsuccessful

<sup>1</sup> Biddulph. See, *United Service Magazine*, July, 1894.

<sup>2</sup> Biddulph mentions that when he passed through the Bolan at the end of August, he "found eight unnamed European graves at Kirta, and about as many more in a rubbish heap at Mach. Of the ones which I did not note or the bodies which may have found no burial, who can tell? for no record was kept of the mortality upon this occasion." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

sortie added to his desire to reach that city at the earliest possible date. He himself started for the front immediately after the sick had been brought in to Quetta from Kach-Amadan, and on the 25th of August, after a three days' halt at Killa Abdulla, he crossed the Khojak Pass and arrived at Chaman, having, on the way thither, made the unpleasant discovery that the country was almost bare of forage and grain, and that most of the springs had run dry.<sup>1</sup> In front of him, difficulties of the same kind would have to be met, for the Afghans had cut the water-channel at Gatai, and supplies for men and animals must be collected before another step in advance could be taken. To achieve this object, he despatched, on the 26th, two small columns of all arms, commanded respectively by Lieutenant-Colonel T. Bell and Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Iredell—the left column accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Lindsay, Commanding Royal Engineer, the Road Commandant, Major Westmacott, and a staff of Engineer Officers, to open up the Gatai water-supply and to reconnoitre thirty miles towards Kandahar; the right column to forage in the Kalani Valley.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst waiting for these preliminaries to be completed, General Phayre received the disquieting news that a part of the Khelat Contingent, which was a thousand strong, had mutinied;<sup>3</sup> and as there was the likelihood of their stirring up the Shorawak Pathans to attack Gulistan and Killa Abdulla, both of which posts had been for some time threatened by tribal gatherings, he had to strengthen their garrisons with detachments of the 2-15th Foot, and at the same time to order a wing of the 78th Highlanders, on their way up from Sibi, to turn aside at Darwaza in the Bolan Pass and proceed to Khelat, where it was to remain till all fear of disturbance in that State should have passed away<sup>4</sup>—a necessary precaution, but most unwelcome

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Phayre reported that the whole of the contingent had mutinied—Sandeman only a portion of it.—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 66.

to the officer commanding at Quetta, who, at this very moment, was telegraphing that he was urgently in need of troops.<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of all these difficulties and anxieties, General Phayre received his first news of the Northern Relief Force. It was contained in the following letter from Colonel Tanner to Sandeman, by whose directions it was opened by the officer commanding at Chaman and its contents wired to Quetta.

“KILLAT-I-GHILZAI, 20th August.

“MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

“Just a line to say I have heard from General Roberts to-day ; he is four marches off and will be here on the 24th. I received your letter dated 10th and replied to it the same day. We are all well and collecting supplies for Roberts and on the road towards Kandahar. We are well off for supplies here. Roberts expects to be near Kandahar on the 29th.”<sup>2</sup>

There was no possibility of Phayre's force being anywhere near Kandahar on the 29th of August, as it was not until the 30th that he began to cross the Khojak, and, though he had written to Roberts that he hoped to arrive before that city on the 2nd of September, it was the 5th before all the corps shown in the Table at the end of this chapter had safely crossed the pass, by which time Roberts had defeated Ayub Khan and stood in no further need of his co-operation.

As early as the 30th of August, Phayre had foreseen that this would be the case, and recognizing that he should only enhance the difficulties of the situation at Kandahar by adding several thousand men and many animals to the number to be fed in and around that city, he had sent the following telegram to the Quartermaster-General : —“I submit to his Excellency's consideration that the intelligence received from General Roberts yesterday and that given by Primrose

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 67.



to-day, that Ayub Khan had withdrawn his force to the Argandab, four or five miles north-west of Kandahar, and that the whole country from this to Kandahar and around that city for a radius of fifteen or twenty miles has been denuded of all supplies, renders it matter for immediate and serious consideration whether, under the circumstances, I should advance more of my troops from Chaman to Kandahar, than will be sufficient to re-establish and stock with provisions the posts *en route*, re-establish the telegraph, and clear Tukht-i-Pul of the tribal gatherings which still appear to be hovering about it. One Brigade of Infantry with some Native Cavalry, Mountain guns, and the Field Batteries will, I think, be sufficient for this. . . . In this way I can stock the road, economise men and food, and do the utmost possible to assist the large force at Kandahar."

Phayre was a keen soldier, anxious for distinction, conscious that his officers and men would feel it hard to be stopped short of the goal towards which they had so painfully and laboriously struggled, not blind to the risk of the work actually performed by them being lost sight of in the admiration evoked by Sir Frederick Roberts's successes; yet he put aside the promptings of personal ambition, and resisted the strong pressure brought to bear upon him by members of his own Force, when he saw that they ran counter to the best interests of the British Forces in Southern Afghanistan taken as a whole. Nothing in his military career did him greater credit than the sending of a telegram, the suggestions contained in which were so little in accordance with his natural inclinations, and it is painful to have to record that any doubts that he may have felt as to the treatment in store for his troops were fully justified by the sequel. The bronze star given to Roberts's Force and to the garrison of Khelat-i-Ghilzai, was refused to men whose labours and risks had been greater than theirs, and the modest despatch in which their General showed how well they deserved to share in the distinction, was not published in the *London Gazette*, though the fact that Phayre had been in

independent command from the day when communication with Kandahar was cut off, entitled it to that honour.

#### TABLE OF MAJOR-GENERAL PHAYRE'S FORCE.

##### ARTILLERY.

D-B Royal Horse Artillery, Major F. W. Ward.  
 F-2 Royal Artillery, Major J. R. J. Dewar.  
 14-9 Royal Artillery (Heavy Guns),<sup>1</sup> Major G. A. Crawford.  
 2 25-pounders and 2 9-pounders,<sup>1</sup> Captain E. Buckle.  
 No. 2 Mountain Battery, Major R. Wace.

##### CAVALRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General H. C. Wilkinson, Commanding.  
 15th Hussars, Lieutenant-Colonel G. Luck.  
 2 Squadrons 2nd Bombay Cavalry, Major W. H. J. Stopford.  
 1 Squadron Poona Horse, Major C. M. Erskine.  
 2nd Sind Horse, Major M. M. Carpendale.  
 1 Squadron 2nd Madras Cavalry, Captain W. B. Warner.

##### 1ST INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General H. H. James, Commanding.  
 2-11th Foot, Lieutenant-Colonel W. T. Corrie.  
 8th Bombay Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel S. Fellows.  
 10th Bombay Infantry, Major C. E. Blowers.  
 16th Bombay Infantry (detachment), Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Iredell.

##### 2ND INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General T. S. Brown, Commanding.  
 2-15th Foot (head-quarters and wing), Major R. L. Dashwood.  
 63rd Foot (detachment), Captain H. R. Cook.  
 5th Bombay Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. C. Hunt.  
 27th Bombay Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel T. Bell.

##### BOMBAY SAPPERS AND MINERS.

No. 3 Company, Lieutenant G. H. W. O'Sullivan.  
 No. 4 Company, Lieutenant J. Neville.  
 No. 5 Company, Lieutenant E. C. Spilsbury.

<sup>1</sup> On the 17th August, Phayre telegraphed that having regard to the strong position taken up by Ayub Khan's army and its heavy artillery he had determined to take with him the garrison battery 14-9 Royal Artillery, and battery made up of 25-pounders and 9-pounders which he had discovered in the Quetta Arsenal. *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, p. 54.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### Sir Frederick Roberts's Arrival at Kandahar

On the 25th of August, having completed his arrangements for the withdrawal of the garrison of Khelat-i-Ghilzai—2 guns I-C Royal Artillery, a squadron of the 3rd Sind Horse, and two companies 66th Foot—Sir Frederick Roberts entered on the last stage of his long march. The distance that still lay between him and his goal—eighty-six and a quarter miles—he divided into six marches, with one day's halt at Robat.

March 17.	August 25th.	Khelat-i-Ghilzai to Jaldak	. 15 $\frac{3}{4}$	miles.
„ 18.	„ 26th.	Jaldak to Tirandaz . .	16	„
„ 19.	„ 27th.	Tirandaz to Pomazai <sup>1</sup> . .	15	„
„ 20.	„ 28th.	Pomazai to Robat . .	19	„
	„ 29th.	Halt.		
„ 21.	„ 30th.	Robat to Mohmand . .	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	„
„ 22.	„ 31st.	Mohmand to Kandahar . .	13	„
Total Distance . .			86 $\frac{1}{4}$	„

Daily Average 14 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles.

The road for the first few miles out of Khelat was narrow and frequently intersected by dry watercourses ; but, later, it widened out and presented fewer difficulties, and the Division arrived in good time at Jaldak, where it pitched its camp close to the river, on ground much broken by nullahs and ditches, all filled with the skeletons of the camels that had perished in Sir Donald Stewart's first advance

<sup>1</sup> This place in some accounts of the march is wrongly called Akund Khel—that village lying half-way between Pomazai and Robat.—H. B. H.

to Khelat.<sup>1</sup> At Tirandaz, at the end of the second day's march, General Roberts learned that Ayub Khan had raised the siege of Kandahar, withdrawn to the left bank of the Argandab, and taken up a position between the villages of Paimal and Mazra. The news was a day or two old, and as Roberts's movements depended on the enemy's, he ordered Brigadier-General Hugh Gough to make, with the 3rd Bengal Cavalry and the 3rd Punjab Cavalry, a forced march of thirty-four miles to Robat, where he was to put himself into communication with General Primrose and ascertain the actual state of affairs in and around Kandahar. He would have gone with the party himself, but, prostrated with fever, he had to send Colonel Chapman, the Chief of the Staff, in his place. Riding rapidly, Gough reached Robat soon after mid-day of the 28th of August, flashed the news of his presence to Kandahar, and received in return the welcome intelligence that the Afghans were still in the position they had taken up on the 25th—intelligence which Chapman quickly sent back to Roberts, who meanwhile had advanced to Pomazai, and was busying himself in making preparations for intercepting Ayub Khan, if it should turn out that he had begun moving on Ghazni.<sup>2</sup> Seven thousand men of all arms, with the lightest possible equipment, were to hold themselves in readiness to move in two marches to a point on the Argandab distant thirty-four miles from Tirandaz, and about forty above Kandahar; Gough's two regiments of Cavalry, threading their way through a tangle of hills by an unknown track, were to strike the river some miles nearer to Kandahar than the Force whose flank they were to cover; and the hospitals, non-effectives, and baggage, escorted by the two Field guns, a regiment

<sup>1</sup> Deputy Surgeon-General Hanbury's Diary.

<sup>2</sup> "The information obtained regarding his (Ayub Khan's) movements amounted to little or nothing; it was, however, clear that the Afghan Army held a strong defensive position and evinced no intention of abandoning it without a struggle." (Chapman, p. 300.)

of Cavalry, and two thousand five hundred Infantry, were to march slowly forward and concentrate at, or near, Robat, where they were to occupy an entrenched position.<sup>1</sup>

Chapman's message cancelled these dangerous arrangements, and the next day the main body of the Division marched to Robat, the many sick and footsore protected by Tanner's Baluchis, halting at Khel-i-Ahmud.<sup>2</sup> Partly on account of the General's state of health, and partly to give the rear-guard time to come up, the 29th was spent in reconnoitring and foraging, one party capturing three thousand sheep.<sup>3</sup> Whilst Hugh Gough was awaiting Roberts's arrival at Robat, he was joined by Colonel St. John, and Majors Adam and Leach, who rode into his camp on the evening of the 28th. They remained for the night and gave a full account of all their adventures and mishaps during the siege and previous operations.

The question of leaving the main road and marching across the hills which separate the valley of the Turnak from the valley of the Argandab, came up again for discussion at Robat, and Major Adam was consulted as to the roads running through this district. His blunt answer that there were no roads, that the proposed plan was impracticable, and that the right way to deal with Ayub Khan's army was to attack it from the south-west, thus cutting it off from its line of retreat on Herat, finally killed the plan; and Major Leach was instructed to prepare a map, on a large scale, of the country around Kandahar, including the ground lying beyond Karez Hill and the

<sup>1</sup> Chapman, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> "After Khelat-i-Ghilzai every one suffered much from diarrhoea. This, added to poor food, reduced the men so that I do not think the Force could have reached much further than it did." (Letter from an officer who marched from Kabul to Kandahar, quoted by Dr. Duke at page 265 of his *Recollections*.)

<sup>3</sup> "I shall not readily forget the baaing and bleating that nearly maddened us, or the hullabaloo of the owners who followed the sheep! We paid the just price and regaled ourselves on mutton and melons." (Sir Hugh Gough's "Old Memories." *Pall Mall Magazine*, April, 1899, p. 540.)



village of Pir Paimal, where it was now clear that the coming battle would be fought. General Roberts was naturally desirous that before his Force, with its enormous number of transport animals, arrived at Kandahar, the garrison of that city should have recovered possession of the sources from which the British cantonments had drawn their water—sources which lay beyond Karez Hill and were therefore in the hands of the Afghans; but Primrose, conscious of the weakness of that garrison and of the position which it was its first duty to defend, declined to risk an engagement with a strongly posted enemy, in an attempt to reoccupy the cantonments, whilst Roberts's troops were still twenty miles off.

On the 29th of August, a letter arrived from Ayub Khan, in which, after declaring that battle had been forced upon him at Maiwand<sup>1</sup> and that he was still anxious to be on good terms with the British Government, he asked the British Commander "to tell him in a friendly way" what he thought the best course for him—Ayub Khan—to pursue in order that "affairs might be settled in an amicable manner," to which letter Roberts sent the following curt reply:—

"In answer to your letter asking my advice, I can only recommend you to send in the prisoners in your power to Kandahar, and submit yourself unconditionally to the British Government."<sup>2</sup>

On the 30th of August, the reunited Force made a short march to Mohmand, where Phayre's letter, detailing the difficulties with which he was struggling, put an end to all hope of his co-operation

<sup>1</sup> "After that I was informed that the English had halted at Kushk-i-Nakhud. On receipt of this news I thought it well that my troops should not take the road to Kushk-i-Nakhud, but should proceed by that of Maiwand, and I hoped that the English might show me friendship. Early in the morning, when my troops were marching to Maiwand, the English army came and began to fight. What was preordained came to pass. I have given you the particulars and this is the real truth." (Extract from Ayub Khan's Letter.)

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1880), No. 3, pp. 90, 91.

in the military operations now close at hand ; for the next march brought the Kabul Relief Force to Kandahar and, almost immediately, into collision with the enemy.

On the 31st of August the Division left Mohmand at 2.30 a.m., and at 8.30 a.m. arrived before the Shikapur Gate, where Primrose had undertaken to provide breakfast for the troops, and grain and water for the transport animals. The men got some food, but in the midst of "a scene of the most indescribable confusion, as all the baggage had cut in and surrounded the troops,"<sup>1</sup> and this confusion was soon increased by the arrival of the sick, both European and Native, who were to be admitted to the already overcrowded hospitals in the Citadel. Major Adam gives a vivid picture of their condition and of the chaos which the arrival of Roberts's Force temporarily created in Kandahar. "These (the sick) were slowly driven in (I can use no other word) by the Baluchi Regiment, closing the march of the Bengal Division. They certainly numbered five hundred<sup>2</sup> wretched creatures and cripples, mounted on refuse transport, or in dandies and doolies, for whom it was difficult to find room. At the same time our commissariat agreed to send out supplies to the Kabul Force, including everything from pipe-clay to pots of jam. Carriage for this was sent in, and nobody will wonder when I say that, owing to the streams of men and animals from the east and from the west, the streets in Kandahar leading to the Citadel became almost impassable."

It was through these streets that Sir Frederick Roberts rode to the Resident's quarters to snatch a few hours' rest before entering on the arduous work that lay before him ; and it was on the confusion then observed, for which his own troops were mainly responsible, that he formed the unfavourable opinion of the order and discipline

<sup>1</sup> *Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Surgeon-General Hanbury put the number at a thousand. See his Diary of the 31st of August.

of the garrison of Kandahar which, many years later, found expression in his Autobiography.

At 10 a.m. the First and Second Brigades seized, unopposed, Picket and Karez Hills, and the north-eastern spur of the range overlooking Old Kandahar, thus gaining a position covering the city, which gave the Force the command of an ample supply of good water and placed it within striking distance of the enemy. From Picket Hill the Afghans occupying the Baba Wali Pass could be observed with pickets thrown forward on a low ridge overlooking the cantonments and the city; but beyond this nothing could be seen of Ayub Khan's army, which lay hidden behind the hills that rise abruptly between Kandahar and the Argandab.<sup>1</sup>

To obtain the information necessary for the maturing of the General's plans, a reconnoitring party, consisting of two Mountain guns 11-9 Royal Artillery, the 3rd Bengal Cavalry, and the 15th Sikhs, commanded by Hugh Gough and accompanied by the Chief of the Staff, Colonel Chapman, went out about 1 p.m. to force the enemy to disclose his dispositions. Gough made straight for the high ground above the village of Gundigan, where he halted the guns and infantry. Pushing forward with the cavalry another mile or mile and a half, and avoiding as far as possible all enclosures, he emerged at last on an open space of turf about a mile from the village of Pir Paimal, where the Afghans seemed to be strongly entrenched. The appearance of Gough's cavalry at once drew the fire of the enemy's artillery, and in a very short time the dry watercourses, which formed a natural entrenchment along the entire front of Ayub Khan's position, filled with men who opened a brisk fire on the intruders. The 3rd Bengal Cavalry, "admirably handled by their commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. D. Mackenzie,"<sup>2</sup> now fell back on the Infantry, and the Mountain guns opened fire, partly to test the range

<sup>1</sup> Chapman, p. 301.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

and partly to check the Afghans, who were pouring into the gardens near Gundigan ; but, satisfied with what he had seen, Gough soon sent back the guns and directed the Infantry to cover the retirement of the Cavalry. At the first sign of withdrawal, the enemy pressed forward in great strength, and with such persistency that all the troops were ordered to fall in under arms, and the Heavy Battery was requisitioned from the Citadel. This was at once sent out by the Herat Gate, its passage through the city increasing the confusion that reigned there, by driving the crowds of wretched followers, still slowly making their way towards the hospitals, into the side streets.<sup>1</sup> Not till after sunset, by which time two Brigades had deployed and firing had been taken up all along the line, did the Afghans desist from following up the Sikhs, and, but for the steadiness of that fine regiment under its able Commander, Colonel G. R. Hennessy, and the enemy's indifferent shooting, there would have been heavy losses to deplore ;<sup>2</sup> as it was, the reconnaissance proved that the enemy was full of spirit, and justified Primrose's refusal to reoccupy cantonments whilst the Relieving Force was beyond supporting distance.

It was supposed that the position taken up by Roberts's troops lay outside the limit of range from the Baba Wali Pass, but more than one shell from the enemy's rifled cannon fell into the camp ; and as it was clear that Ayub Khan's troops were too near neighbours to be left for many hours undisturbed, the General, on his return from the city, determined to give battle without delay,<sup>3</sup> and ordered the officers commanding Divisions and Brigades, each with his Staff, and all officers next senior in rank to the Brigadiers, to be at Headquarters at six o'clock the next morning that he might, in person, explain to them his plan of attack, to understand which a knowledge of the position and strength of the two forces is essential.

<sup>1</sup> Comments on the Campaign by the Assistant Quartermaster-General of the Kandahar Force.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>3</sup> Chapman, p. 302.

On retiring from before Kandahar, Ayub Khan had fallen back behind the Paimal Mountain, a curiously shaped range of hills, running from north-east to south-west, nearly parallel to the course of the Argandab, at a distance varying from a mile to a mile and a half from that river's left bank. This range is pierced by two passes, the Baba Wali, about two miles and a half from Kandahar, easy and practicable for all arms; and the Murcha, three miles north-east of the Baba Wali Pass, impracticable for guns, but accessible to cavalry. Ayub Khan's main camp lay close to the village of Mazra, between the two passes, the former of which he had had strongly fortified; but his position extended for fully two miles along the slopes of the Pir Paimal Mountain. All the villages in this district are embedded in orchards and walled gardens, and the ground is much cut up by canals and irrigation channels, whilst emplacements for the Afghan guns had been thrown up at all favourable points along the entire length of the position, to defend which Ayub had with him:—

32 Guns.  
800 Regular Cavalry.  
3,000 Irregular Cavalry.  
4,000 Regular Infantry.  
5,000 Ghazis.

Total strength—32 guns, 3,800 horsemen, 9,000 footmen.

The British force was encamped behind Karez and Picket Hills, with outposts on the summits of each, and stretched southwards to the Herat road near the village of Surpuza. It consisted of

32 Guns,  
2,103 Sabres,  
8,837 Rifles,

exclusive of the guns and troops left to guard Kandahar; and though numerically weaker than the enemy's army—10,940 as against 12,800—it was greatly superior to it in discipline, efficiency, and equipment.



From Picket Hill it was possible to look into the Baba Wali Pass, and from observations which revealed that rifled cannon were in position on its south-eastern slopes, that its Kotal was crowded with Ghazis, and that a strong body of regular cavalry were holding the comparatively open ground over which it must be approached,<sup>1</sup> it was clear that, through it, the Afghans were expecting the British advance to be made, and that they would be unprepared for an attack from any other direction. General Roberts therefore determined merely to threaten the pass and to fall upon Ayub Khan's right flank, force back the troops at the south-western extremity of his position upon his main camp, and in so doing cut him off from his direct line of retreat on Herat—the plan suggested by Major Adam at Robat, and which Hugh Gough's reconnaissance had shown to be practicable.

The task of carrying the enemy's position was assigned to the Bengal Division, commanded by Major-General Ross. It consisted of three Infantry Brigades, the First and Second of which were to make the attack, whilst the Third was to form up on its own camping ground, awaiting orders to advance in support; and of a Cavalry Brigade, which was to be posted behind the hamlet of Surpuza to threaten Ayub Khan's rear, and to be ready to interpose at the right moment between his troops and the Argandab, to the left bank of which river Roberts intended its movements to be confined.

## TABLE

SHOWING COMPOSITION AND DISPOSITION OF THE BENGAL DIVISION ON THE  
1ST SEPTEMBER, 1880.

*1st Infantry Brigade,*

drawn up behind Karez Hill, Brigadier-General Macpherson commanding.

92nd Highlanders.

2nd Gurkhas.

23rd Pioneers.

<sup>1</sup> Chapman, p. 303.

24th Punjab Infantry.

6-8 Royal Artillery (screw guns) Mountain Battery.

Strength : 6 guns, 1,815 Rifles.

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*2nd Infantry Brigade,*

echelonned in rear of 1st Brigade, Brigadier-General Baker commanding.

72nd Highlanders.

2nd Sikh Infantry.

3rd Sikh Infantry.

5th Gurkhas.

2nd Baluchis (29th Bombay Infantry).

No. 2 Mountain Battery.

Strength : 6 guns, 2,506 Rifles.

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*3rd Infantry Brigade,*

formed up on its own camping ground, Brigadier-General Macgregor commanding.

2nd Battalion 60th Rifles.

4th Gurkhas.

15th Sikhs.

25th Punjab Infantry.

11-9 Royal Artillery Mountain Battery.

Strength : 6 guns, 1,894 Rifles.

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*Cavalry Brigade,*

Brigadier-General Hugh Gough commanding.

E-B Royal Horse Artillery.

9th Lancers.

3rd Bengal Cavalry.

3rd Punjab Cavalry.

Central India Horse.

Strength : 4 guns, 1,378 Sabres and Lances.

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Total strength of Bengal Division : 22 guns, 1,378 Sabres and Lances, 6,215 Rifles.

To the two Infantry Brigades of the Bombay Division, commanded by Lieutenant-General Primrose, was to fall the double duty of threatening the Baba Wali Pass and holding the ground vacated by

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the Bengal Division, from Picket Hill, through Karez Hill, to Chihilzina ; its Cavalry Brigade, posted about a mile north of the Eedgah Gate, was to watch the Murcha Pass, and in the event of an irruption from that quarter to protect the right flank of the British position ; and four Forty-Pounders were to be placed in a well-selected spot about a hundred yards to the right of Picket Hill, from which they could be brought to bear on the Baba Wali Pass.

### TABLE

SHOWING STRENGTH AND COMPOSITION OF BOMBAY DIVISION ON THE  
1ST SEPTEMBER, 1880.

Lieutenant-General Primrose Commanding.

*1st Infantry Brigade,*

Brigadier-General Burrows commanding.

66th Foot.

1st Grenadiers (1st Bombay Infantry).

Jacob's Rifles (30th Bombay Infantry).

Strength: 997 Rifles.

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*2nd Infantry Brigade,*

Brigadier-General Daubeney commanding.<sup>1</sup>

2nd Battalion 7th Royal Fusiliers.

4th Bombay Infantry.

19th Bombay Infantry.

28th Bombay Infantry.

Strength: 1,587 Rifles.

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*Cavalry Brigade,*

Brigadier-General Nuttall commanding.

3rd Bombay Cavalry.

Poona Horse.

3rd Sind Horse.

Strength: 725 Sabres.

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<sup>1</sup> Promoted *vice* Brooke killed in the sortie of the 16th of August. This excellent officer died some months later of cholera at Kandahar.—H. B. H.

*Artillery.*

C-2 Royal Artillery.

5-11 Royal Artillery (four 40-pounders).

No. 2 Company Bombay Sappers and Miners.

Strength : 10 guns, 38 Rifles.

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Total strength of Division: 10 guns, 725 Sabres, 2,622 Rifles.<sup>1</sup>

Roberts's plan was both simple and sound ; but Ayub Khan had either seen through it, drawing the right conclusion from Gough's reconnaissance, or he had conceived a plan of attack on the British left, the exact counterpart of Roberts's proposed attack on his right ; for, during the night, he strongly occupied the villages of Gundi Mulla Sahibdad and Gundigan, lying close up to the British position on the direct line of the contemplated advance.

<sup>1</sup> There must subsequently have been an interchange of troops between the two Infantry Brigades, for Daubeny held the ground from which the Bengal Division had advanced, with four companies of the 66th Foot and two of the 1st Bombay Grenadiers, both originally belonging to Burrows's command, in addition to two companies of the 28th Bombay Infantry belonging to his own.—  
H. B. H.

• 2 | : ||





## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### Battle of Kandahar

AN hour before daylight on the morning of the 1st of September, all the troops in and around Kandahar fell in under arms ; at 6 a.m. they were dismissed for breakfast ; and at 8 o'clock the two Divisions, provided with cooked rations, took up the positions assigned to them, Ross's men having previously struck their camp and placed their tents and baggage in a walled enclosure. As soon as the necessary dispositions had been completed, Sir Frederick Roberts—still very unwell—established his Head-Quarters on Karez Hill, from the summit of which he could keep an eye on the Baba Wali Pass, and at the same time follow the movements of his own troops till they passed from sight behind the Pir Paimal Mountain. Round the shoulder of that range, large bodies of Afghan troops, covered by clouds of skirmishers, could be seen issuing from the gardens and orchards. In front of Macpherson's and Baker's Brigades the Ghazis had already opened a desultory fire, but the action only began about 9 a.m. when the 40-pounders on the right of Picket Hill replied for the first time to the Afghan guns on the Baba Wali Kotal. Simultaneously, C-2 Field Battery, from a position a little in front of Picket Hill, and 6-8 Mountain Battery, from a point a little in front of Karez Hill, began shelling Gundi Mulla Sahibdad to prepare the way for Macpherson's advance, whilst the four guns Royal Horse Artillery opened fire on Gundigan from a spot south of the Herat Road, near Chihilzina, with the object of covering the advance of Baker's Brigade, and the subsequent movements of Gough's Cavalry.

As soon as the fire of the Artillery had had time to tell upon the enemy, Ross ordered Macpherson to attack Gundi Mulla Sahibdad and to follow up its capture by clearing the enclosures between that village and the Paimal Mountain; at the same time directing Baker, whilst keeping in touch with Macpherson's left, to drive the enemy first out of the gardens and orchards in his immediate front and then out of Gundigan.

Led by Colonel Battye, the 2nd Gurkhas burst into Gundi Mulla Sahibdad, but the Afghans, numerous and determined, drove them back—a momentary check, quickly repaired, for joining hands with the 92nd Highlanders, under Colonel Parker, and supported by the 23rd Pioneers and the 24th Punjab Infantry, the brave little men returned to the attack, and the two regiments carried the village with splendid dash. The Ghazis, on their part, fought with fierce courage, facing a bayonet charge and finally defending a house to which they had retired, with such tenacity that a gun had to be brought up to dislodge them.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Baker's Column had encountered no less stubborn resistance in crossing a plain cut up by watercourses and thickly set with willow trees, and in threading its way through walled and loopholed enclosures, and the narrow lanes of Gundigan. The brunt of the fighting in this part of the field was borne by the 2nd Sikhs under Colonel Boswell, and the 72nd Highlanders under Colonel Brownlow, both regiments having frequently to fix bayonets to carry positions, or to check the bold rushes of the Afghans. Their courage and determination were crowned with complete success, but the Highlanders lost their gallant

<sup>1</sup> "Here a strange incident occurred. Lieutenant Menzies of the Highlanders being wounded, was carried into a hut to await the arrival of the surgeon. While lying there, attended by one or two of his men, a Ghazi jumped up from a dark corner of the hut and, before he could be despatched, inflicted two more wounds upon Menzies, fortunately, neither of them very severe." (*The Times* Correspondent.)

commander,<sup>1</sup> also Captain St. J. T. Frome and Lance-Sergeant Cameron, described by Roberts as "a grand specimen of a Highland soldier"; and both they and the Sikhs had many men killed and wounded.

The Afghans, expelled from Gundi Mulla Sahibdad and Gundigan, fell back in good order on the village of Paimal, and both Brigades, followed by the two Mountain Batteries, which had continued in action till their fire was masked by the advance of the Infantry, rounded the shoulder of the Pir Paimal Mountain and pressed rapidly up the Argandab Valley, clearing out the enemy, as they advanced, from the orchards and gardens which abound in the fertile strip of land lying between the river and the base of the hills. Macpherson's Brigade which, moving on an inner curve, had soon outstripped Baker's, encountered a heavy fire as it wheeled into the valley, but, pushing on, still led by the Highlanders and Gurkhas, it captured the village by turning its right and attacking it in front in a series of rushes.<sup>2</sup>

The Afghans now fell back about a mile and a quarter, to an entrenched camp which covered both the north-western mouth of the Baba Wali Pass and Ayub Khan's main camp, a position the importance of which he evidently recognized, for reinforcements from the Reserve were seen hurrying towards it, and the guns on the Kotal had been wheeled round to enfilade its approaches.<sup>3</sup>

The capture of Paimal had put an end to all likelihood of an Afghan attack on the British camp; so Roberts, who had been kept informed of the progress of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Brigades, on learning the nature of the obstacle by which the former was now confronted, ordered Macgregor to advance to its support. He himself

<sup>1</sup> "He (Brownlow) had on many occasions highly distinguished himself as a leader—at the Peiwar Kotal, during the operations round Kabul at the latter end of 1879, and notably on the 14th of December, when he won the admiration of the whole force by his brilliant conduct in the attack and capture of the Asmai Heights." (Roberts's Despatch.)

<sup>2</sup> Hensman, p. 517.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

accompanied the column, intending to join Ross at Paimal; but that General, confident in the courage and endurance of his men, had not waited for reinforcements to follow up the enemy, and Macpherson's troops, hugging the mountain on their right, came suddenly on the Afghan position. The enemy's guns were posted in rear of a watercourse, backed by a high bank, protected by which the artillerymen fired rapidly and well. Their right rested on a small building, and on their left, lying on the hillside, three or four hundred riflemen poured a heavy fire into the leading British troops, upon whom the guns on the Baba Wali Kotal had also been brought to bear. Major White, commanding the foremost companies of the 92nd, recognizing the danger of delay, instantly called upon his men for just one more effort "to close the business,"<sup>1</sup> and the Highlanders, and two companies of Gurkhas under Major S. E. Beecher, responded unhesitatingly to the call. Dashing forward with fixed bayonets, they drove the Afghans headlong from their entrenchments, losing themselves upwards of forty men in the charge. Ever foremost in action, the gallant White was the first man to reach the enemy's guns, but Private Inderbir Lama of the 2nd Gurkhas, scarcely a step behind, laid his cap on one of them as a proof that it had been captured by his regiment.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst this was going on in the centre of the enemy's position, on its extreme left a half-battalion of the 3rd Sikhs led by Money had charged a large body of Afghan Irregulars, who fled in haste, abandoning the three guns they had with them. This success completed the rout of Ayub Khan's forces, for his Regular troops, leaving the Artillery and the Ghazis to shift for themselves,<sup>3</sup> had taken to flight when Ross turned the Pir Paimal range, and, concealed by

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> Hensman, p. 518.

<sup>3</sup> "It is said that Maiwand was won by Ghazis, or by a mob of rudely armed ryots (peasants) led by those fanatics, and one certainly saw much to confirm the idea that the strength of an Afghan army lies in its Irregulars." (Hensman, p. 522.)

the numerous vineyards and orchards, had crossed the Argandab unobserved; and there being no cavalry on the further bank to intercept them, they all got away—the Heratis retiring in good order towards Herat, through the Zemindawar, and the Kabulis towards Ghazni, by the Khakrez Valley. Owing to the intricate nature of the ground, Ross had no idea of the completeness of his victory, and expecting the enemy to take up a fresh position and offer further resistance, he halted his men to replenish their ammunition pouches, and sent off Captain Straton, the Superintendent of Army Signalling, to the Baba Wali Kotal to heliograph the news of his success to Roberts. Straton never sent the message, for half-way up the Pass a Ghazi leapt from a ravine and shot him through the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the two Brigades had resumed their advance—Baker, on the left, now leading—they crossed the road to the Baba Wali Pass, the state of which, blocked as it was with abandoned guns, camp equipage, ammunition, grain, and forage, revealed the magnitude of the Afghan defeat. About a mile from the entrenchment taken by the 92nd Highlanders and 2nd Gurkhas, they came upon Ayub Khan's camp, with its tents all standing just as the troops had left them when, early in the morning, they marched out to meet the British attack; and outside one of them lay the body of Lieutenant Hector MacLaine, who, taken prisoner during the retreat from Maiwand, had been murdered at the very moment when deliverance was at hand. Sir Frederick Roberts, in his Despatch, attributed the act to the guard set over the prisoner; but as the men composing it were Regulars, and had probably fled with their comrades an hour before, it seems more likely that the murderer was a Ghazi, for the medical evidence went to prove that the one wound—a sharp cut

<sup>1</sup> "In Captain Straton Her Majesty's Service has lost a most accomplished, intelligent officer, under whose management army signalling, as applied to field service, reached a pitch of perfection probably never before attained." (Roberts's Despatch.)



in the throat which had nearly severed the head from the body—had only just been inflicted.<sup>1</sup>

The state of the camp showed clearly that the Afghans had counted on victory, for not a tent had been struck, nor a saddle-bag carried away. "All the rude equipage of a half-barbarous army," to quote the words of an eye-witness, "was left at our mercy—the meat in the cooking-pots, the bread half-kneaded in the earthen vessels, the bazaar with its ghee-pots, dried fruits, flour and corn—just as it had been deserted when the noise of battle rolled up from Pir Paimal."<sup>2</sup> Food of all kinds was welcome spoil, but of far greater importance were the Afghan guns, every one of which fell into the hands of the victorious troops. Pursuit was out of the question, for the Infantry were worn out, and by the time the Bombay Cavalry had made their way through the deserted Baba Wali Pass and descended into the Argandab Valley, the Afghans, except for a few stragglers who were overtaken and killed,<sup>3</sup> had crossed the river, and were fast finding shelter among the hills. Ross therefore halted his men just beyond Mazra till Roberts, coming up with Macgregor's column, ordered the 2nd and 3rd Brigades back to Kandahar, where they arrived before dark.

Meantime, the Bengal Cavalry Brigade was trying, but too late, to overtake and break up Ayub Khan's retreating troops. The four regiments composing Gough's force had remained in an enclosure, part of the walls of which had been levelled to give them free exit, till the heights above Gundigan had been seized by the 72nd Highlanders; then, about 11 a.m., they issued from this shelter and

<sup>1</sup> "I dismounted and examined the body. He had a clean, incised wound on the neck, which all but severed the head from the body. His death could not have taken place more than half an hour before I saw him." (Deputy Surgeon-General Hanbury's Diary.)

<sup>2</sup> Hensman, p. 521.

<sup>3</sup> "General Nuttall . . . pursued during the afternoon, up the Argandab Valley to the east of the river, killing 100 stragglers." (Ibid. p. 528.)

rode along the Herat road at a gallop. Beyond Gundigan they wheeled to the right to interpose between the Afghans and the river, and had just traversed an open stretch of ground when their Commander received orders to make for the ford at Kokeran, about three miles in his rear, cross the river, and do his best to overtake the enemy. The order was carried out as quickly as possible, but nullahs and watercourses caused much delay,<sup>1</sup> and when the Brigade, issuing from the river, had come out on to the wide, open plain on its western bank, the enemy whom they had hoped to overtake were beyond their reach. Far away, in the direction of the caravan route to Girishk, a large body of horsemen, probably Ayub Khan's escort, were vanishing in a cloud of dust; and the main body of fugitives that, an hour before, had crossed the river by a ford four or five miles higher up its stream, had already gained the hills, which form the southern boundary of the Khakrez Valley. Gough made every effort to cut off the tail end of the retreating Afghans, but the great heat and the exhausted state of the horses, many of which had been out eighteen hours the previous day, held him back, and only a few scattered bands were overtaken and destroyed.

At the foot of the mountains, some of the fugitives seized a village, and occupied a line of sangars on a rocky spur behind it. Major Gerard, commanding a squadron of the Central India Horse, dismounted his men to dislodge them with carbine fire; but Gough, fearing that he might be drawn into too big a business, peremptorily recalled him.<sup>2</sup> By this time, not only had Ayub Khan's Regulars

<sup>1</sup> "A deep dyke across our line, which it was impossible to jump, now caused much delay. The regiments had to find their way in single file by two or more narrow tracks, up and down its steep banks." (Duke, p. 373.)

"Hampered as the cavalry were by narrow lanes and unbridged water-channels, our progress to the Argandab river was but slow, and a lot of precious time was needlessly wasted, especially in crossing the canals." (Gerard's Diary, p. 306.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 307.

got safely away, but his Irregular forces had so completely dispersed as to make further pursuit useless;<sup>1</sup> so, as the sun sank, the Brigade recrossed the river by the upper ford, passed Macpherson's camp, where it heard of the Infantry's complete success, and rode slowly back to Kandahar through the darkness of the Baba Wali Pass.<sup>2</sup>

The Afghan losses in the battle of Kandahar were much heavier than the British. Roberts estimated the killed alone at twelve hundred men; his troops buried six hundred bodies between Kandahar and the village of Pir Paimal, and there must have been many wounded.

The British losses, as will be seen from the following Table, were not heavy when the strength of the Afghan position, and the courage with which it was defended, are taken into account :—

<sup>1</sup> "Just as it is difficult to understand the rapidity with which large numbers are assembled in Afghanistan for fighting purposes, so the dispersing of an Afghan army and its attendant masses of tribal levies in flight is almost beyond comprehension." (Chapman, p. 305.)

<sup>2</sup> At page 374 of his *Recollections*, Dr. Duke gives the following graphic account of the ride of Gough's Brigade :—

"Riding with my brother doctor of the 3rd Bengal Cavalry, in rear of the two leading regiments, we saw how the heat was telling on the horses. Every three or four hundred yards a charger was down and panting, his rider trying to coax him onwards. In spite of our efforts, the enemy gained the full advantage of their start for life. On the right of the plain, Captain Egerton's squadron of the 3rd Punjab Cavalry charged a number of Afghans just breaking across the plain, and killed upwards of a hundred. Three of his men were wounded severely, and Lieutenant Baker and three others slightly; but even here many of the enemy escaped, the horses being too exhausted to follow. One horse of this squadron dropped dead as he afterwards arrived at the edge of the water. Indeed, ten horses of the 3rd Bengal and three of the 3rd Punjab Cavalry died from the effects of the day's heat. Other small parties of the 3rd Punjab Cavalry killed detached portions of the enemy, in which Lieutenant Beresford's and several chargers were wounded. A squadron of the Central India Horse, under Major Gerard, swept along the hills on the left of the plain, and delivered a charge home with telling effect into a number of the enemy who had all but reached the cover of the hills, and whose comrades opened fire on our troopers."

# BATTLE OF KANDAHAR

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## NUMERICAL RETURN OF CASUALTIES.

	Killed.				Wounded.					Total in each corps.
	British Officers.	Native Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers.	Rank and File.	British Officers.	Native Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers.	Rank and File.	Followers.	
Staff . . . . .	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
E-B Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
C-2 Royal Artillery . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	2
6-8 Royal Artillery . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	6
3rd Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	2
3rd Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	4	—	7
Central India Horse . . . . .	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	4	—	6
3rd Bombay Cavalry . . . . .	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
3rd Sind Horse . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
60th Rifles . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2
72nd Highlanders . . . . .	2	—	—	7	2	—	1	19	2	33
92nd Highlanders . . . . .	—	—	1	10	2	—	7	62	2	84
15th Sikhs . . . . .	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	3	—	6
23rd Pioneers . . . . .	—	—	—	2	1	—	1	11	2	17
24th Punjab Infantry. . . . .	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	10	1	13
25th Punjab Infantry. . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	2
2nd Gurkhas . . . . .	—	—	—	8	1	1	—	21	2	33
4th Gurkhas . . . . .	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	4	—	7
5th Gurkhas . . . . .	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	2	5
2nd Sikhs . . . . .	—	—	—	3	1	—	1	22	2	29
3rd Sikhs . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	5	—	6
2nd Baluchis . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
Commissariat Department . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
	3	1	1	35	11	4	16	179	18	
Total . . . . .	40				228					
Grand Total . . . . .	268									

16 horses and 7 mules killed ; 17 horses and 5 mules wounded.

The three British officers killed were

Captain E. Straton . . . . . Divisional Staff.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel F. Brownlow . . . . . 72nd Highlanders.  
 Captain St. J. T. Frome . . . . . " "

and the eleven wounded,

Captain R. H. Murray . . . . .	72nd Highlanders.
Lieutenant S. C. H. Monro. . . . .	" "
Lieutenant S. A. Menzies . . . . .	92nd Highlanders.
Lieutenant D. W. Stewart . . . . .	" "
Captain G. W. Willock . . . . .	3rd Bengal Cavalry.
Lieutenant L. S. H. Baker . . . . .	3rd Punjab Cavalry.
Lieutenant N. F. F. Chamberlain . . . . .	Central India Horse.
Lieutenant D. Chesney . . . . .	23rd Pioneers.
Lieutenant-Colonel A. Battye . . . . .	2nd Gurkhas.
Lieutenant-Colonel F. F. Rowcroft . . . . .	4th Gurkhas.
Major J. B. Slater . . . . .	2nd Sikhs.

In the First Brigade, the under-mentioned officers and men specially distinguished themselves in the attack on Gundi Mulla Sahibdad<sup>1</sup> :—

Major G. S. White . . . . .	92nd Highlanders.
Private John Dennis . . . . .	" "
Drummer James Boddick . . . . .	" "
Lieutenant H. S. Wheatley . . . . .	2nd Gurkhas.
Sepoy Mangal Jaisi . . . . .	" "
„ Wazir Sing Nargarkoti . . . . .	" "
„ Makkareah Rana . . . . .	" "
„ Bisram Thapa . . . . .	" "
„ Maniram Lohar . . . . .	" "

and

Major G. S. White . . . . .	92nd Highlanders.
Lieutenant C. W. H. Douglas . . . . .	" "
Corporal William McGillvray . . . . .	" "
Private Peter Grieve . . . . .	" "
„ John McIntosh . . . . .	" "
„ D. Grey . . . . .	" "
Major S. E. Beecher . . . . .	2nd Gurkhas.
Havildar Gopal Borah . . . . .	" "
Sepoy Inderbir Lama . . . . .	" "
„ Tikaram Kwas . . . . .	" "

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.



showed great gallantry and forwardness in the attack on the Afghan entrenchment near the foot of the Baba Wali Pass.<sup>1</sup>

In the Second Brigade the following British officers, Native officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers were mentioned for conspicuous conduct during the attack on Gundigan and the clearing of the surrounding enclosures<sup>2</sup> :—

Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Boswell	.	.	.	.	.	2nd Sikhs.
Major H. M. Pratt	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Major J. B. Slater	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Major F. E. Hastings	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Subadar-Major Gurbaj Sing	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Jemadar Alla Sing	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Naick Dir Sing	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Sepoy Hakim	.	.	.	.	.	" "
" Jai Sing	.	.	.	.	.	" "
" Pertab Sing	.	.	.	.	.	" "
" Bir Sing	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Colour-Sergeant G. Jacobs	.	.	.	.	.	72nd Highlanders.
Colour-Sergeant R. Lauder	.	.	.	.	.	" "
Lance-Corporal J. Gordon	.	.	.	.	.	" "

## OBSERVATION

So far as the Infantry was concerned, the battle of Kandahar was the battle of a good tactician, every big and little unit in the Force supporting all the rest ; but the part assigned to the Cavalry in the original plan made the work of the Infantry harder than it need have been, and lost to the victors the full fruits of their victory. In his account of the engagement, the *Times* Correspondent, General Vaughan,<sup>3</sup> gave it as his opinion that better results would have been obtained if the Cavalry had been attached by regiments to the different Brigades ; but a careful consideration of the ground on which the battle was fought and of the relative positions of the opposing forces,

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *My Service in the Indian Army*, by Sir Luther Vaughan, K.C.B., Appendix VI. p. 291 ; also *Times*, October 15th, 1880.

points to the conclusion that the fault lay, not in the massing of the cavalry regiments, but in the original intention to confine their action to the left bank of the Argandab, an error corrected in the end, but corrected too late. If, on the evening of the 31st of August, the Cavalry, the Horse Artillery, and a regiment of Infantry had been posted at Kokeran, ready to cross the river next day as soon as Baker had captured Gundigan; and if, favoured by the open ground on its right bank, they had pushed rapidly upstream towards the higher ford, the discovery that their line of retreat was in danger would have weakened the Afghan defence, and their whole position would have fallen into Ross's hands with comparatively little loss to him and at a heavy cost to the enemy, whose regular troops, instead of retiring in good order, would have been utterly routed and dispersed.

The capture of all Ayub Khan's guns might seem to give finality to his defeat; but he soon rallied his followers, with the result that the Indian Government had to keep a much larger force at Kandahar throughout the winter than was necessary for the protection of the city against local hostility, and that after the departure of the British garrison, a second battle of Kandahar had to be fought before Abdur Rahman could establish his sovereignty over Southern Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The mistake which had such serious consequences could not be excused on the plea of ignorance of the locality, for both sides of the Argandab were known to officers of the garrison, and to Colonel Chapman and other officers of the Bengal Division; and they cannot have failed to point out to Roberts that the ground on the right bank of the river was as favourable, as that on the left bank was unfavourable, to Cavalry operations.—H. B. H.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### Evacuation of Northern Afghanistan

ABLY seconded by his Chief of the Staff, Colonel W. S. A. Lockhart, and by his Assistant Adjutant-General, Major W. J. Boyes, Sir Donald Stewart, whilst assisting Roberts in the organization of the Kandahar Field Force, had been energetically continuing the preparations for his own retirement from Kabul, and on the 5th of August had sent the following telegram to the Viceroy :—"All our objects have been attained, and nothing remains to be done but to hand over Kabul to the Amir, who is naturally anxious to establish himself in his capital and bring his government into working order. Politically, withdrawal now will be well timed, and it happens we shall leave Kabul on the day fixed for the purpose two months ago. The state of affairs at Kandahar, moreover, renders it highly necessary that we should avail ourselves of present opportunity, whilst country here is quiet and free from complications." <sup>1</sup>

This message Lord Ripon repeated to the Secretary of State, with the following endorsement of its views. "We are of opinion that Stewart's proposal to evacuate Kabul must be approved. I entirely agree with him as to political importance of seizing present opportunity; if we let this slip the situation may change, and we may be unable to withdraw without serious embarrassment." "I entirely approve evacuation of Kabul," was Lord Hartington's reply,<sup>2</sup> and the withdrawal, sanctioned by both Governments, began only a day later than the day originally fixed for it.

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Meantime a divergence of view on a point of cardinal importance had suddenly declared itself between Stewart and his Political Officer. Sir Donald, distrustful of Abdur Rahman, both as a ruler and an ally, was unwilling to give him arms, or to leave him in possession of the fortifications erected by Roberts.<sup>1</sup> Lepel Griffin, convinced that the new Amir was an able man, and sincere in his wish to live on good terms with the Indian Government, desired, within reasonable limits, to strengthen his hands. The order to blow up all the works around Kabul, had been given without Griffin's knowledge, and when he heard of it accidentally from the Commanding Engineer, he went straight to Stewart to express his surprise that so important a decision should not have been communicated to him. Stewart defended his silence on the ground that the retention or destruction of fortifications was a matter entirely for the military authorities, and declared that, as a soldier, he could not consent to leave behind him forts and walls which, at some future day, might be used against British troops; but Griffin refused to admit that a question which involved grave political issues, could be regarded as a purely military concern; and pointed out that the settlement just concluded aimed at the reconstitution of a strong Afghanistan, standing in friendly relations to the Indian Government; and that if, with one hand, Sir Donald led Abdur Rahman into Kabul and, with the other, blew up the works that might enable the Amir to hold his own in that city, he would discredit him with his subjects, and abandon him defenceless to the attacks of his enemies, who, however divided among themselves, would be certain to combine for his overthrow. Even from the military standpoint the Political Officer condemned the General's refusal to accord the Amir material aid, arguing that, though a lavish

<sup>1</sup> "Griffin is much taken with Abdur Rahman's intelligence and nice manners. Unfortunately, like all Afghans, he wants everything from us, and all he has to give in exchange is the chance of his friendship. The fact is, we have made a mess of the business, I fear, and have been wasting our time on a man who has no real strength of his own." (*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 374.)

gift of guns and rifles might be dangerous, a moderate number, sufficient to enable him to arm his own special friends, would act as a check on the tribes that might be tempted to harass the retiring British force, whilst the possession of vast fortifications, requiring large numbers of troops to hold, would be a security against treacherous pursuit, should treachery enter into the Amir's plans.

Finding that he could make no impression on Stewart by spoken arguments, Griffin withdrew to embody them in a memorandum; and, when this also failed to alter the General's views, he appealed to the Government of India, who twice refused to interfere. Fortunately for Afghanistan, and fortunately for India, Mr. Lepel Griffin was not a man to be daunted; and when, in protesting for the third time against what he saw to be a fatal error, he requested that his protest should be placed on official record, the Government gave way, and telegraphed to Stewart directing him to come to an understanding with his Political Officer. It would seem that, on reflection, Sir Donald had arrived at the conclusion that the position he had taken up was less vital than he had at first declared it to be; for he now told Griffin that, if he were convinced that Abdur Rahman really set great store by the fortifications, he would cancel the order for their destruction. The proof asked for was quickly forthcoming. The same evening a swift messenger carried to Abdur Rahman Griffin's instructions for a letter to be written to himself, in which the Amir was to set forth the dangers that would threaten his position at Kabul if the fortifications were destroyed; and when, the next morning, an explicit and strongly worded request that they might be left intact, arrived and was laid before Stewart, the General yielded "gracefully and cordially" to the Political Officer; and "if he thought the Amir's letter a strangely timely one, he never showed any surprise."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The situation was thus happily saved; but I was certain then, and am certain now, that if the fortifications had been blown up, and this insulting display of distrust had been shown to our chosen nominee in the sight of all Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman would never have established himself at Kabul,



Reassured on this vital point and apprised of the approaching departure of the British troops, Abdur Rahman had been drawing nearer to Kabul; and, on the morning of the 11th of August, he and Sir Donald Stewart met, for the first and last time, outside the western gate of the Sherpur cantonment. It was the Afghan Prince who had asked for the interview, yet, once inside the tent in which it was to be held, he seemed to have nothing to say; and as neither Stewart, nor the two Generals, Hills and Gough, who had accompanied him, could speak Persian, there was an awkward silence after Lepel Griffin had finished making a few complimentary remarks, so that Sir Donald lost patience and was in the act of rising, when the Amir's tongue was suddenly loosened. With warmth and earnestness Abdur Rahman now thanked Stewart and Griffin for the honour and consideration they had shown him throughout the negotiations, and expressed his deep gratitude to the British Government for having placed him on the throne of his ancestors. His interests and the interests of that Government were one, so he declared, and his friendship for it would be undying. All present were struck by the sincerity of the Amir's tone and manner, and it was with feelings of genuine compassion that the three Generals parted from a man who would, they believed, soon fall a victim to the rivalries by which he was surrounded. The Political Officer, who had had many opportunities of judging of Abdur Rahman's character and abilities, took a more hopeful view of his prospects, believing that if the British Government only extended to him its full and ungrudging support, he would overcome successfully his many difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

and Afghanistan would have fallen back into the chaos and anarchy from which the late Amir saved it." (Article entitled "Afghanistan and the Indian Frontier," by Sir L. Griffin, K.C.S.I., in the *Fortnightly Review* of November, 1901, written a few weeks after the death of Abdur Rahman.)

<sup>1</sup> "Very few persons believed that Abdur Rahman could maintain himself on the throne, and even the Foreign Secretary, Sir Alfred Lyall, the ablest of the Simla officials, who possessed an intimate knowledge of Afghan affairs, prophesied that the Amir would have to leave the country with the British army." (Ibid.)

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At the end of the interview, the Amir rode back to his camp to prepare for the morrow's public entry into Kabul, and the British officers returned to Sherpur to make over the cantonment, the Bala Hissar, and the forts on the various heights around the city, to the Afghan officials appointed to receive them. When the last of them had changed hands, all the troops in and around Kabul, organized into one Division, commanded by Major-General Hills, and every regiment and detachment scattered along the hundred and eighty miles which separate Kabul from Peshawar, set their faces eastward and marched for home. The whole movement was carried out in accordance with a programme drawn up by Major Boyes and issued to every Commanding Officer, Staff-Officer, and Head of Department; and to prevent any clashing of troops, the exact position of each corps was telegraphed daily to Sir Donald Stewart's Head-Quarters.

The force now set in motion amounted to twenty-three thousand men, of whom, as shown by the accompanying Table, about seven thousand started from Kabul :—

TABLE.

Major-General J. Hills Commanding.

Royal Artillery	. . .	{ 11-11 Garrison Battery.
		{ G-4 Field Battery.
Cavalry	. . .	{ 1st Punjab Cavalry.
		{ 2nd Punjab Cavalry.

1st Infantry Brigade—Brigadier-General C. Gough commanding.

2-9th Foot.  
28th Punjab Infantry.  
45th Sikhs.

2nd Infantry Brigade—Brigadier-General R. J. Hughes commanding.

59th Foot.  
3rd Ghurkhas.  
19th Punjab Infantry.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Part sent on with convoys.

## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

3rd Infantry Brigade—Brigadier-General W. Daunt commanding.

67th Foot.

27th Punjab Infantry.<sup>1</sup>

5th Punjab Infantry.

Divisional Corps—3 companies Bengal Sappers and Miners.  
The Corps of Guides.

The strength of the force which marched out of Kabul towards Peshawar was as follows :—

(FROM A RETURN DATED 17TH AUGUST, INCLUDING THE GARRISONS AS FAR AS JAGDALLAK)

British Officers.	European troops.	Native troops.	Total European and Native troops.	Followers. <sup>2</sup>	Horses.	Camels.	Ponies.	Mules.	Draught bullocks.
139	1,961	5,331	7,431	3,411	1,372	2,089	1,694	754	282

The under-mentioned troops had left Kabul previously on their return journey to India, and are not included in the above return :—

A-B Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	} About 2,000 men.
G-3 Royal Artillery, Field Battery . . . . .	
6-11 " " Elephant Battery . . . . .	
12-9 " " " " . . . . .	
19th Bengal Lancers . . . . .	
5 companies Bengal Sappers . . . . .	

In addition to the foregoing there were, on the Line of Communications between Butkhak and Lundi Kotal, under Major-General R. O.

<sup>1</sup> Part sent on with convoys.

<sup>2</sup> Regimental followers only.

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Bright (whose head-quarters were at Safed Sang), some 14,000 troops, disposed as follows, viz :—

*3rd Section.*—From Butkhak to Safed Sang, under Brigadier-General R. Sale-Hill.

2 Guns No. 4 Hazara Mountain Battery (from Kabul).  
6th Dragoon Guards (Carabineers).  
17th Bengal Cavalry.  
25th Foot.  
22nd Punjab Infantry.  
30th     ,,     ,,

*2nd Section.*—From Rozabad to Dakka, under Brigadier-General J. Doran.

C-3 Royal Artillery.  
Part of 5th Bengal Cavalry.  
8th Bengal Infantry.  
9th     ,,     ,, (part of).  
1st Madras Infantry (part of).  
15th     ,,     ,,

(The first Section, from Lundi Kotal to Peshawar, is not included in this statement.)

The following "Moveable Columns" were also held available in the vicinity of the main road :—

*No. 1 Moveable Column.*—From Safed Sang at Mardandan, overlooking the Hissarak Valley :—

4th Bengal Cavalry (part of).  
51st Foot.  
31st Punjab Infantry.  
1st Ghurkhas.

*No. 2 Moveable Column.*—Near Jellalabad :—

2 Guns No. 1 Mountain Battery.  
4th Bengal Cavalry (Head-quarters).  
2-5th Fusiliers.  
9th Bengal Infantry (Head-quarters).  
1st Madras Infantry (part of).

*At Pesk Bolak :—*

L-5 Royal Artillery.  
5th Bengal Cavalry (Head-quarters).  
2-14th Foot.  
32nd Pioneers.  
1 company Madras Sappers and Miners.

To move twenty-three thousand disciplined troops over rough roads, running through sweltering valleys, with high passes or narrow defiles at either end ; to encamp them, night after night, on cramped spaces, with limited water-supply, picketing every height and searching every lateral valley, lest some sudden attack should break their rest, was, in itself, no easy task ; but its difficulties were trebled by the necessity of supplying the needs and assuring the safety of forty thousand camp-followers, to say nothing of many Hindus and some Afghan Sirdars, who had elected to go into exile rather than remain within reach of Abdur Rahman's strong hand. Large droves of cattle accompanied the fugitives, and the transport for the vast host consisted of every description of carriage—carts, hackeries, ekkas, elephants, camels, mules, ponies, donkeys, and pack bullocks<sup>1</sup>—many of them without drivers, for the Hazaras engaged at Kabul had deserted, though their expenses for the return journey had been guaranteed to them.

The whole Kabul Division encamped the first night at Butkhak ; but the second night, owing to the limited space available at Lattaband, Gough's Brigade, which acted as rear-guard throughout the march, halted three miles short of the Kotal. The third evening, the rear-guard did not get into Seh Baba till 9 p.m., and many of the baggage animals, laden since 4 a.m., never got in at all, but lay down and died on the road. There was heavy work to be done and hardships to be borne by every man in the retiring force, but the brunt of the suffering fell on the transport, and the worst of the fatigue and worry on the troops that had it in charge. "It is impossible to describe

<sup>1</sup> "The Return March to India under Sir Donald Stewart in 1880," by Lieutenant-Colonel Walter J. Boyes. *Journal of Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. XXXVII. 1893, No. 180.

"The carriage . . . of the sick down from the front was a great strain to my transport, as the greater portion were conveyed in carts below Safed Sang to Jellalabad, where they embarked on rafts, which, for invalids, were peculiarly advantageous, reducing, as they did, the journey by some four days." (Report of Lieutenant-Colonel H. St. G. Tucker, Chief Director of Transport.)



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in adequate terms the difficulties and perplexities which devolve upon the rear-guard of an army marching by confined, waterless roads in a mountainous region under a broiling sun. Loads get displaced and must be readjusted ; a pony or a camel casts its load, which must be replaced or transferred to another animal, or a wheel comes off in the narrowest and most difficult part of the road. Each and every such incident causes a check along the whole line and a huddling together of animals ensues ; ponies and mules begin to fight and kick ; weak and jaded followers declare they cannot march, but they must be got on somehow. Such, in a few words, are some of the ever-recurring dilemmas which, from morn till night, tax the patience and endurance of a baggage or rear-guard. The embarrassments above referred to are considerably enhanced when, as in this instance, the transport is of a very mixed kind. Movement must then be regulated by the pace of the slowest animal.”<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Boyes in his narrative of the march, and the picture is not exaggerated. There are no statistics to show the percentage of sickness among the troops subjected to these harassing and exhausting conditions, nor how many of the “jaded followers” died on the road, but the report of Major C. Hayter, Director of Kabul Transport, shows that of the nine thousand four hundred and thirty-three animals starting from that city, thirteen hundred and eighty perished ; one convoy alone losing a hundred and eighty-five camels out of four hundred and seven, in crossing the Lattaband Pass.

Beyond Seh Baba, owing to the confined nature of the country, it became necessary to move the force by brigades ; and after Gandamak, where it concentrated for the last time, it had to be broken up into half-brigades, the scanty supply of water and the narrow camping grounds in the Khyber forbidding the passage of any larger body. In consequence of this rearrangement, the rear-guard remained at Safed Sang from the 18th to the 23rd of August,

<sup>1</sup> “The Return March to India under Sir D. Stewart,” by Colonel Boyes.

and when it resumed its march, it took with it a large accumulation of heavy camp equipage and twenty thousand maunds (over seven hundred tons) of ordnance stores, carriage for which was provided by utilizing every sick camel that was pronounced capable of carrying a light load.<sup>1</sup> Even with this aid some Government property, food stuffs, and grain had to be left behind<sup>2</sup> at this and other posts, and the Khujianis and men of Hissarak fought fiercely for the possession of some twenty or thirty cartloads of miscellaneous stores abandoned at Basawal, the latter carrying off the lion's share.<sup>3</sup> At Dakka, Gough's Brigade halted again to cover the troops still defiling through the Khyber, and on the 1st of September moved on to Lundi Kotal, where its Commander was instructed to remain till further orders.

Practically, the British retirement from Northern Afghanistan had been unopposed. There were a few attempts to plunder, and the Khujianis assembled in large numbers, but, warned by Gough, did nothing to impede his march; and, so far from suffering from hunger, the troops enjoyed almost a superfluity of good things, thanks to the Chief Director of Transport, Colonel Tucker, who, foreseeing that the exodus from Kabul might come at any moment, on his own responsibility, had sent back the transport animals, which had brought to Peshawar the heavy baggage and surplus ordnance stores, laden with food stuffs and forage, for distribution all along the line of communications.<sup>4</sup>

Day by day, as the troops moved forward, the Force under Sir D. Stewart's command grew less and less, for each corps, as it emerged from the Khyber, came under the jurisdiction of Major-General G. C. Hankin, commanding the Peshawar District. Hankin's instructions were to avoid a large assemblage of men at the Harri-

<sup>1</sup> Report by Lt.-Colonel H. St. G. Tucker, Chief Director of Transport.

<sup>2</sup> Major C. Hayter, Director of Kabul Transport.

<sup>3</sup> "There seems to have been some misunderstanding regarding the carriage for this particular station." (Lieutenant-Colonel H. St. G. Tucker's Report.)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Sing-ke-Burj encampment, midway between Jamrud and Peshawar, and to prevent any delay at Peshawar itself, or on the banks of the Indus. Lieutenant-Colonel G. B. Wolseley, who had had considerable experience in the moving of troops both on the Kandahar and Kuram lines, was sent to Hankin as Chief of the Staff, to assist in the laborious work of planning and supervising the orderly march of nine batteries of Artillery, nine regiments of Cavalry, twenty-one regiments of Infantry, and eight companies of Sappers and Miners. The difficult task of setting thousands of men across the swollen river at Attock and Khushalgarh—the Commander-in-Chief had agreed to Hankin's request that he might be allowed to use both the Grand Trunk and Kohat roads—fell to Captain C. A. Carthew; and, as in the previous year, great assistance was rendered to the military authorities by Mr. H. B. Beckett, Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar, who collected the five hundred boatmen needed for the operation, and warded off a threatened strike among them by his firmness and tact.<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to the rapidity with which the dispersion of the troops was effected, to the healthiness of the summer of 1880, and to the unremitting attention devoted to the sanitary arrangements by Deputy Surgeon-General P. T. Fraser, and his two principal medical officers, Surgeon-Major J. Good and Surgeon-Major J. Browne,<sup>2</sup> only the 9th Foot, the last regiment to leave Afghan territory, was attacked by cholera before reaching the Indus. A second outbreak occurred after crossing that river, at the Hussan-Abdal encamping ground, but both were of a mild type and occasioned very slight delay.

Though the Head-Quarters Staff was not broken up till the 31st of August, Sir Donald Stewart left Jellalabad on the 23rd for Lundi

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I. of this Volume—"The March of Death."

<sup>2</sup> Upwards of 50 sick officers, 1,400 British soldiers, 3,000 Native soldiers, and 3,800 camp-followers from the front had passed through the hands of these three medical officers during the previous six months.

Kotal, where he arrived the next day. All his arrangements had worked and were working well, and his presence and advice were more needed at Simla, where many military problems were awaiting solution, than with the troops whose safety was now fully assured. As questions connected with the occupation of the Khyber were among those that would have to be decided, he halted on his way down and made a careful inspection of Lundi Kotal and Ali Masjid. "The worst site possible for a cantonment or advanced post; every possible objection could be made to it,"<sup>1</sup> was his verdict on the former position, and the latter, though "exceedingly strong," he condemned as too much scattered, too extensive to be "held, if seriously attacked."<sup>2</sup>

At Peshawar, where he arrived on the 30th of August, Sir Donald had a long conversation on frontier affairs with the Commissioner of the District, Colonel W. G. Waterfield. The two men were of one mind as to the "general principle of withdrawing all troops from the frontier," but differed as to the status to be accorded to the border tribes; Waterfield desiring to make them independent both of Afghanistan and India, which in Stewart's opinion would be a mistake.

On the 31st of August, Stewart handed over command of all the troops still in Northern Afghanistan to General Bright, and travelled up to Simla, where Lord Ripon met him with a hearty welcome and the offer of a seat on his Council, made vacant by the resignation of Sir Edwin Johnson; and where, a few days later, he received the gratifying intelligence that the Queen had conferred upon him

<sup>1</sup> *Sir D. Stewart's Life*, p. 382.

Deputy Surgeon-General A. Smith, in consultation with the Principal Medical Officer of the Khyber Force, also carefully inspected the site, and recorded the opinion that "from something inherent in the position and climate of Lundi Kotal, it is a most unhealthy station for European troops," and "strongly recommended, on sanitary grounds, that it be abandoned."—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 383.

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the Grand Cross of the Bath, in recognition of his great services, both military and political, in Afghanistan. His own verdict on the period which covered those services is recorded in his Diary dated Jamrad, August 29th—"Got out of Afghanistan to-day with some pleasure. The last two years have been eventful ones in my life, and I am thankful that I have come through them without any discredit in any particular;"<sup>1</sup> and this modest judgment must, on the whole, be endorsed by the historian. During the two years in which Sir Donald had exercised absolute power over the lives and fortunes of a conquered people, he had never been guilty of an act of injustice or cruelty; he had done his best to soften the hardships which the military occupation of a very poor country must entail upon its people; and he had succeeded in preserving the peace of the territories under his rule and in winning the respect, if not the affection, of the inhabitants of Kandahar. But if as an administrator he takes rank with his great predecessor, Sir William Nott, as a soldier he takes rank below him. It is impossible to picture to oneself Nott throwing away his transport in a purposeless march to Khelat-i-Ghilzai, or committing the tactical blunders which so nearly ended in disaster at Ahmed Khel; and yet, though remembering those two incidents, Stewart had reason to be thankful that he had escaped discredit—he may well have felt in later life that his greatest achievement, the admirably conceived and executed evacuation of Northern Afghanistan, overshadowed by the brilliancy and success of Roberts's march on Kandahar, was not appreciated at its true value. The claims of that achievement to the admiration of every serious student of military history, were well summed up by Colonel Boyes in the article entitled "The Return March to India under Sir Donald Stewart," already quoted from:—"Taking into consideration (so he wrote) the size of the Army, 23,000 men; the number of camp-followers, some 40,000 at least; the large quantity of stores,

<sup>1</sup> *Sir D. Stewart's Life*, p. 387.



ammunition, and supplies ; the mixed description of transport ; the difficult nature of the country ; the lawless, freebooting character of the tribes along the route ; and the season of the year when the march was made, it is not too much to say that the return of the Afghan Field Force to India in 1880, under General Sir Donald Stewart, is one of the most striking examples on record of how a highly-disciplined, well-organized force in the hands of a skilful General can successfully overcome the greatest difficulties."

The withdrawal from Kabul accomplished, the Government turned its attention to the evacuation of the Kuram. This valley, once so ardently coveted by Lord Lytton, had been steadily sinking in value under the test of actual possession. No one now dreamed of dominating Kabul from the Shutargardan Pass, and the road to that city which was to supersede the Khyber route, had come to be regarded by Roberts himself as a mere "by-road." The Commander-in-Chief had never nourished any delusions as to the military importance of the Kuram. In October, 1878, he had recommended that Roberts's Division should be transferred to Peshawar ; in August, 1879, he had anticipated what actually occurred a few weeks later in the advance on Kabul,<sup>1</sup> and it was therefore no wonder that when

<sup>1</sup> "The Shutargardan must ever be considered a bad line of military communications. From Habib Killa, upwards, the road passes through a difficult country over the Peiwar Kotal (8,500 feet) onward to the narrow defile of Hazar Darakht, attaining on the crest of the Shutargardan an elevation of 11,200 feet. The descent to Dobundi and Kushi is extremely difficult and steep ; for wheeled carriages it is impracticable, and it would take a vast expenditure of money to make it passable. The variation of altitude in the short distance which separates Habib Killa from Kushi is surely in itself prohibitory of all thought of a railway beyond Kuram. The above features indicate enormous difficulties for those who may have to provide such continued transport of munitions of war and food supply, as the advance of an army by this route would imply. Unless a transport train far more extensive and more efficiently organized than any we have seen in the last campaign, were available for him, a commander who would advance to Kabul by this line would find enormous difficulties in his way, for, having expended the limited number of days' supply he could hope to carry with him, he must, of necessity, become dependent on the means of some other

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the question of holding, or retiring from, the Kuram came up for settlement, he should have been found declaring that, "as a line of military communications, experience has condemned it, and I abandon it as such without the slightest regret."<sup>1</sup> Watson, the General on the spot, who had had long and trying experience of the unhealthiness of the Kuram, and the restless hostility of the hill-tribes on its borders, was quite as ready to let it go. "I know of no reason for keeping troops any longer in the Kuram," so he telegraphed to the Foreign Secretary on the 2nd of October. "I understand that we have no political interests in the valley, and with regard to our obligations to the Turis, as Government declines to give them a Governor, and they cannot elect one themselves, I will divide the country into districts under leading Malliks, giving each set one of our forts for their protection. Districts will administer their own affairs locally, but will all unite to resist a common enemy. I will now issue the Proclamation forwarded under your telegram of the 28th of August. Can you send me some printed copies? Turis attach great importance to this, and, if widely circulated, the Kabul Government will know that we are in earnest. These arrangements can be made in a few days."<sup>2</sup>

On receipt of this telegram, the Foreign Secretary informed the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab that the evacuation would begin on the 15th of October, and instructed him to arrange with Watson for the rectification of boundaries made necessary by the separation of the Kuram from Afghanistan and the restitution of the Harriab and Khost valleys to the Amir.

The proclamation embodying these political changes was now issued, and at the same time Watson advanced five thousand rupees

column, operating either by the Ghazni or by the Jellalabad road. This would have been General Roberts's condition had he been called upon to advance in March or April last." (Extract from Sir Frederick Haines's Minute of 25th of August, 1879.)

\* <sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 94.

to the Turi and Bangash headmen to meet the expense of raising levies for the defence of the posts and forts, of which they were to be the heirs, and presented them with some rifles, matchlocks, and ammunition captured from the Afghans. These preliminaries accomplished, all troops and stores were withdrawn from the encampment on the Peiwar Kotal—the Shutargardan and Ali Khel had been abandoned by Gordon months before; the Kuram Forts were handed over to the Turis on the morning of the 16th of October; and the troops moved by easy stages down the valley up which Roberts had marched just two years before, and, with the recrossing of the Kuram River, the war in Northern Afghanistan came to an end.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. Sir Donald Stewart has been criticized for the despatch of Roberts's column to Kandahar, and for his own rapid and complete withdrawal from Afghanistan; but the considerations by which he was influenced justified his action in both cases. Technically, the march on Kandahar ran counter to sound military rules, but the circumstances under which it was conducted and the object for which it was undertaken, took it out of the category of enterprises which those rules condemn. Stewart knew, as none of his critics could know, the strength and efficiency of Roberts's isolated and baseless force, and the unlikelihood of its meeting with serious opposition, or suffering from lack of food and forage; and though that knowledge would not have justified him in sending it out on a three-hundred-mile march for an object of small importance, or one that could have been better attained in some other way, it did justify him in doing this when the lives of a large body of Anglo-Indian troops were at stake, and he had good grounds for believing that no other help could have reached them in time to avert fresh disaster.

OBSERVATION II. The time and manner of the evacuation of Northern Afghanistan were determined chiefly by political reasons. Stewart recognized that Abdur Rahman would be Amir in name only till he had entered into possession of his capital, and that his entrance into Kabul must be preceded by the removal of the foreign Force, whose presence was incompatible with the full exercise of his authority ; and, withdrawal once begun, it seemed to him safer, easier, and more economical to carry his troops straight through to India than to halt them at any point between Kabul and Peshawar. He was not ignorant of the misfortune which had befallen the regiments retiring through the Khyber the previous year ; but he knew that the present summer was an exceptionally healthy one in India, and that all precautions would be taken to minimize the risks to which his troops would be exposed, and, against those risks, he set the exhaustion of local supplies, the foul state of the camping grounds, and the bad effect on the health of the men which must be looked for if, under harassing and depressing conditions, they were kept much longer away from their homes.

## CHAPTER XL

### Retirement from Southern Afghanistan

ON the morrow of his victory over Ayub Khan, Sir Frederick Roberts had to face the problem, ever recurrent in Afghanistan, of how to feed his troops, for the supplies remaining in Kandahar were barely sufficient to meet the immediate needs of its garrison, and the resources of the surrounding country were well-nigh exhausted. To make it easier to get at what food might be available in the district, he stopped Phayre's advanced troops at Karez-i-Zarak, twelve miles south of Kandahar; despatched Macgregor's Brigade, accompanied by the Central India Horse, to Chaman, in anticipation of orders to proceed to India; and scattered the troops of the other two Bengal Brigades as widely as prudence would permit. An expedition to Maiwand, for the purpose of ascertaining what treatment the Afghans had accorded to Burrows's dead<sup>1</sup> and discovering whether there were any survivors of the fight, incidentally opened up other sources of supply, by convincing the people that if they kept the peace, they would not be punished for their past offences.<sup>2</sup>

The expeditionary force, consisting of a Field Battery, four hundred and fifty sabres, and two Infantry regiments, all belonging to the Bombay Division, and commanded by Brigadier-General Daubeny, arrived at Maiwand on the 15th of September. On the march, which followed the line of Burrows's retreat, a hundred and

<sup>1</sup> Small detachments of the regiments which took part in the action, accompanied the column for the purpose of identifying the dead.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Brigadier-General A. G. Daubeny's Despatch, dated 23rd September, 1880.



forty-four bodies were discovered and interred; but on the field of battle itself all the dead had been buried, though at different dates, for the earth on the Afghan graves was hard and set, whilst that on the British graves was soft and loose. The bodies of eight British officers were identified, and two Native non-commissioned officers, one transport driver, and four camp-followers, whose lives had been spared, were traced and released. Bringing with him these men and a gun of the smooth-bore Battery found at Hauz-i-Madad, Daubeny returned to Kokeran on the 23rd of September, by which date Sir Frederick Roberts, whose health had been much shaken by the heavy strain, mental and physical, to which he had been subjected during the last twelve months, was no longer in Kandahar. A Medical Board had recommended his early departure for England, but, unwilling to leave the country till all questions connected with its pacification and occupation had been settled, he contented himself, at first, with moving up to Pishin. Failing, however, to recover strength, at the end of a month spent principally with Sandeman at Quetta, he applied to be relieved, and on the 15th of October, handed over the command to Phayre—Primrose had been recalled—and at the invitation of Lord Ripon proceeded to Simla, where he enjoyed the pleasure of receiving from the Viceroy the Queen's autograph letter, conveying her satisfaction with the manner in which the service entrusted to him had been performed. That satisfaction found public expression in the bestowal of a baronetcy, a like honour being accorded to Donald Stewart, and Parliament showed its agreement with the Sovereign by voting to each the sum of £12,500.

The retirement of the Bengal Division, to which the remnants of Burrows's Brigade and the 2nd Baluchi regiment were attached, begun on the 10th of September when the 3rd Brigade left Kandahar for Chaman, was completed by the 23rd of October, on which day the last troops left Sibi for their allotted stations in India. The usual difficulties inherent in the nature of the country had presented

themselves ; but Phayre's expectation, that the relief of Kandahar would be followed by the collapse of the revolt on the line of communications, proved correct, and even the small columns detached to punish the Kakars and Achakzais for their misdeeds met with no opposition. Baker and Macpherson withdrew by the Bolan, whilst Macgregor marched by the Harnai route, re-establishing, as he advanced, the posts along the railway which had been abandoned after the Maiwand disaster. At Sibi, where he arrived on the 8th of October, he reorganized his Force, and marched on the 11th by a circuitous route to Kahan, the principal village of the rebellious Marris, from whom he had been instructed to demand restitution of all treasure and other property plundered from convoys, the payment of a fine of twenty thousand rupees, compensation for private losses, blood money for the slain, and hostages for future good conduct.<sup>1</sup>

The road followed by the Force ran over a succession of mountain ranges, almost impracticable for cavalry, and through gorges so narrow that a laden mule could hardly pass between their rocky sides ; but, thanks to the precautions observed, there were no casualties, and when, on the 6th of November, Kahan came into sight, Mehrulla and Karam Khan, the chiefs of the tribe, warned by a message from Macgregor that only prompt submission could save their village from destruction, came out to meet him, and handed over fifty thousand rupees as a proof of repentance for the past and an earnest of good intentions for the future.<sup>2</sup> Six days later Macgregor's column broke up at Drigri on the British frontier ; the troops belonging to the Punjab Frontier Force marching for Dera Ghazi Khan, and those returning to the Punjab crossing the Indus at Mithankot.

Though the Bengal Division, moving down, had met other Bengal corps, moving up the Bolan, and thought he pass was alive with camels

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Macgregor*, Vol. II. p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 288.

laden with the stores that had accumulated at Sibi, which Sandeman's renewed influence had induced the local chiefs to provide,<sup>1</sup> the future of the province for which troops and stores were bound was still in doubt.

Even under Lord Lytton's administration, though the Viceroy himself might consider the question closed, the case for complete withdrawal from Kandahar had been clearly stated by Sir Donald Stewart in India,<sup>2</sup> and in England by Sir E. Perry,<sup>3</sup> a Member of the Secretary of State's Council, whilst the opposite opinion had been stoutly maintained by Sir Frederick Roberts;<sup>4</sup> but only after Mr. Gladstone had succeeded Lord Beaconsfield as Prime Minister, was an attempt made to arrive at a conclusion by weighing against each other the views of the men most competent to speak for the opposing schools of thought which, for the last five or six years, had been struggling to control the foreign policy of India.

On the Council of the Secretary of State for India, Sir H. Norman, Sir R. Montgomery, and Sir E. Perry advocated, and Sir W. Merewether and Sir H. C. Rawlinson denounced, the proposed retirement from Kandahar.<sup>5</sup> In the Viceroy's Council, the Hon. E. Baring (afterwards Lord Cromer) stood for withdrawal;<sup>6</sup> the Hon. W. Stokes,<sup>7</sup> the Hon. Rivers Thompson,<sup>8</sup> and Sir Frederick Haines<sup>9</sup> against it; whilst the Hon. J. Gibbs, seeing "many objections to our holding Kandahar now, and many good reasons why we may retire from it with comparative ease," did not "oppose such a course,"<sup>10</sup> and Sir Donald Stewart, who thought little of Kandahar's strategical value and was not "an advocate for annexation for any purpose," hesitated

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sandeman*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 2, pp. 27, 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 28-33.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* No. 1, pp. 64-72.

<sup>5</sup> For all these Memoranda see *Ibid.* No. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* No. 2, pp. 67-77, and *Ibid.* No. 3, pp. 11-14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* No. 4, pp. 3-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* No. 3, pp. 6-10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* No. 2, pp. 81-85.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* No. 4, pp. 5, 6.

to support withdrawal, "not on a disapproval of the effect of that action," but on the ground that it would involve the existing Government in a "disregard of obligations which were formally and publicly undertaken by their predecessors in office in the name of Her Majesty the Queen."<sup>1</sup>

Of the military experts, unconnected with either Council, consulted by Lord Hartington, Colonel C. J. East, Head of the Intelligence Department of the War Office, Sir A. Alison, Deputy Quartermaster-General,<sup>2</sup> Sir Garnet Wolseley, Quartermaster-General,<sup>3</sup> and Sir R. Sandeman<sup>4</sup> sided with the supporters of retirement, and the Duke of Cambridge<sup>5</sup> and Lord Napier of Magdala<sup>6</sup> with its opponents.

Within each of the two classes into which, broadly speaking, the writers of these Memoranda must be divided, viz :—those who desired, and those who deprecated the retention of British troops in Southern Afghanistan—there were many differences of view. Sir H. Norman, Sir E. Perry, Sir R. Montgomery, and Sir E. Baring pressed for a return to India's natural frontier, the frontier which had been hers since the annexation of the Punjab, and for the restitution

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 4, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 2, pp. 42-46.

<sup>3</sup> Wolseley in his able Memorandum on the subject writes :—" Bearing in mind the tenure upon which we hold possession of India, I would for military reasons deplore our permanent retention of Kandahar. Many of those who now urge us to keep possession of that place know little of the difficulties we had to face in 1857. Having served through the Indian Mutiny, I remember them well, and looking back at them now, it is difficult to understand how others who had the same experience can wish to add to the responsibilities which then nearly crushed us. What should we have done in 1857, 1858, and 1859 if we had had a garrison at Kandahar ? . . . To occupy a point so far removed beyond our frontier would be a serious financial burden even in times of profound peace, and in time of any great trial its possession would indeed be a white elephant, capable of ruining our Indian Empire by the cost which the necessity of supporting it would entail upon us. . . . Its retention will certainly cripple our military resources, and it would seriously hamper our strategical operations in the event of any great internal disturbance in India." (*Ibid.* p. 80.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* No. 5, pp. 16-21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* No. 2, pp. 46, 47.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 77-79.

of Quetta to the Khan of Khelat; but the Hon. J. Gibbs, Colonel East, Sir Garnet Wolseley, and Sir R. Sandeman, all advocated the retention of Pishin and Quetta, and East advised making the extension of the Harnai railway to Kandahar a condition of handing over that city to Abdur Rahman.

On the other side, Sir F. Haines, Lord Napier of Magdala, and Sir W. Merewether were in favour of annexation, pure and simple, the first-named including Khelat-i-Ghilzai and the line of the Helmand in the province which he was eager to add to the British Indian Empire; whereas Rawlinson strongly deprecated annexation, and, "coupled with the condition of retaining a strong British garrison in the province for military purposes," proposed offering "the sovereignty of Kandahar to Abdur Rahman"; whilst Stokes was of opinion that the only reasonable alternative course to annexation was to be found in the restoration of Yakub Khan to the Amirship and the making over to him of Kandahar.<sup>1</sup>

The calculations as to the annual military cost of annexation varied with the standpoint of the writers—Merewether contending that it would be trifling, Sir E. Baring believing that it would be considerably in excess of £1,000,000, and Sir H. Norman setting it down at £1,400,000; but these calculations cannot be tested by results, since Kandahar was not annexed.

The prophecies of the wonderful effects of annexation on the trade of Kandahar and the rapid conversion of its inhabitants into loyal subjects, can no more be put to the test of subsequent experience than the calculations as to its military cost; but some opinion as

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Stokes, who was the legal member of the Viceroy's Council, seized this opportunity to put on record his firm belief in the Ex-Amir's innocence:—"I am," so he wrote, "one of the few persons, who have read the mass of the so-called evidence against that Amir. I say now, as I have always said, that it does not establish his complicity in the murder of our Envoy, and I therefore think that we should not treat his resignation as irrevocable." He was also legal member when Lord Lytton was Viceroy.—H. B. H.



to their nature can be arrived at by inquiring into the fulfilment, or failure of fulfilment, of former predictions of men of the same school, and to this test they were subjected by Sir E. Baring in the first of his Memoranda :—Comparing the results of Lord Salisbury's policy "with the previous utterances of the rival schools of Indian politicians," so he wrote, "I find that, on the one side, not one of the advantages, which, according to the advocates of a 'forward' policy, were to have been reaped by a departure from the time-honoured traditions of India's greatest statesmen have as yet been attained. . . . On the other hand, I find that the gloomy predictions of the opposite school have been realized to a very remarkable extent. History, I conceive, scarcely furnishes another so striking example of the speedy and complete fulfilment of political prophecy. . . . Nothing would be easier than to quote numerous passages from the abundant literature on this subject in support of these views. I content myself with one example from the writings of each school.

"Shortly after the signing of the treaty of Gandamak, Sir H. Rawlinson commenced an article in the *Nineteenth Century* in the following words :—'The curtain has fallen on the second Afghan war almost as suddenly as it rose, and the public, in so far as it is represented by the London press and the London world, seems almost ashamed at having been deluded into taking an interest in so small and ephemeral a matter. A reaction of this nature is perhaps the natural consequence of the exaggerated tone which was taken at the outset by the opponents of the war in regard to its character and the risks that it involved. The late Lord Sandhurst, it is well known, affirmed a few years back that it would not be safe to advance to Kandahar with a less force than 30,000 men, and the expense of such an enterprise was popularly estimated at twenty millions of money. We were told, indeed, that our so-called 'Jingoism in the East' would inevitably lead either to national disaster or national bankruptcy, and now, because these sinister predictions have not

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been realized, but, on the contrary, a short, inexpensive, and not inglorious campaign, skilfully conducted and bravely supported, has been crowned with a peace promising substantial political results, we are taunted with having made a mountain out of a molehill, with having raised a hobgoblin for the mere purpose of laying it—and, in fact, with having betrayed the nation into a needless and unseemly exhibition of alarm.'

"Compare this jubilant statement with the subsequent events. When 'the curtain had fallen on the second Afghan war,' no long interlude was allowed to elapse before it rose again on the third,<sup>1</sup> and again, a little later, on an episode which may almost be dignified by the name of a fourth war. For a considerable time we had a force across the frontier largely in excess of the 30,000 men of which Lord Sandhurst spoke. The popular estimate of the cost of the war is, I fear, not far wrong. Two incidents—the murder of the British Envoy and the defeat of General Burrows—have occurred, which came nearly within the category of 'national disaster.' We are, I believe, free from any danger of 'national bankruptcy,' but Sir Henry Rawlinson's policy has taken us as far along the road to the bankruptcy of India as it was possible to travel in two years. The most 'sinister predictions' of the adverse school have been too truly realized. A war which has lasted for two years can scarcely be called 'short.' It has certainly not been 'inexpensive.' It has had its inglorious as well as its glorious incidents. It has not always been 'skilfully conducted.' The 'peace' with which we were 'crowned' when Sir Henry Rawlinson wrote, was of the most ephemeral description. Its 'political results' were certainly not to be termed 'substantial.' The Afghan difficulty bears, I fear, in allegorical language a far greater resemblance to 'a mountain' than to 'a molehill.' The 'hobgoblin' has indeed been raised,

<sup>1</sup> Officially called the 2nd Phase of the 2nd Afghan War, but, as a matter of fact, it was a 3rd War.—H. B. H.

but has not yet been laid. The nation, or at all events a large section of it, so far from exhibiting 'a needless and unseemly alarm,' is, I fear, far too prone to forget the true history of this Afghan business, and still to turn for guidance to those politicians who have in the past led it astray.

"Compare, by the light of our present knowledge, these utterances of Sir Henry Rawlinson with the opinion expressed by the Government of India on January 28th, 1876. After reviewing the probable results of forcing a British Resident on the Amir—results which were all subsequently brought about—the Government of India went on to say, 'a condition of things like this could not exist for any length of time without leading to altered relations, and possibly even in the long run to a rupture with Afghanistan, and thereby defeating the object which Her Majesty's Government have in view. . . . We are convinced that a patient adherence to the policy adopted towards Afghanistan by Lord Canning, Lord Lawrence, and Lord Mayo, which it has been our earnest endeavour to maintain, presents the greatest promise of the eventual establishment of our relations with the Amir on a satisfactory footing, and we deprecate, as involving serious danger to the peace of Afghanistan, and to the interests of the British Empire in India, the execution, under present circumstances, of the instructions conveyed in your Lordship's Despatch.'

"If I dwell on the previous utterances of the two schools, it is because Indian questions are often—in my opinion too often—decided by an appeal to the authority of experts, and I submit that, if any such appeal is to be made, it is essential to bear in mind, in deciding on the policy of the future, the relative claims to inspire confidence which each of the two schools can adduce by an appeal to the past."<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt that the Gladstone Ministry did bear those

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 2, pp. 67, 68.

relative claims in mind ; no doubt that the evidence before them to show that not one of the advantages which according to the one school were to be reaped from the "forward" policy had been obtained, whilst the gloomy predictions of the other school had been realized to a remarkable extent, did weigh with them in determining to abandon Kandahar ; but that abandonment was involved in the principles upon which, when in office, the Liberal Party had acted, and for which, when out of office, it had strenuously contended ; and nothing short of positive proof that the evacuation of Southern Afghanistan must endanger British rule in India would have justified them in refusing to take that step. Such proof was altogether lacking, and Sir H. Rawlinson's assertion that, in retiring to Pishin or Sind, "we should abdicate our position as a first-class Asiatic power and must be content, hereafter, to play a very subordinate part in the history of the world," as also his predictions that "withdrawal would predispose many of our large feudatories to listen to intrigues against the stability of our rule," have been fully refuted by subsequent events. As for Sir D. Stewart's argument against retirement based on the contention that, whether the policy of the late Government was good or bad, it ought not to be disturbed without the clearest necessity, it could have little weight with men who knew it was not they, but their predecessors in office, who had broken the continuity of Great Britain's Indian frontier policy, and had the full conviction that, in returning "to the time-honoured traditions of India's greatest statesmen," they would be giving both to that country and to Afghanistan the best assurance that, though the evil influences of panic and lust of conquest might, from time to time, get the upper hand in the councils of the Government and people of Great Britain, common sense and an honest love of peace and justice were the normal foundations of her rule.

The inquiry into the military and political value of Kandahar, which may be said to have begun with Sir D. Stewart's Memorandum

of the 1st of April, 1879, ended with Lord Napier of Magdala's Memorandum of the 12th of October, 1880; for all subsequent Minutes and Memoranda were but protests against, or expressions of agreement with, a decision at which the British Government had arrived, and from which there was no likelihood of their receding.

The Despatch of the 11th of November, 1880,<sup>1</sup> in which Lord Hartington communicated that decision to the Government of India, after briefly summarizing the views which he and his colleagues had rejected, declared in unequivocal terms that recent experience had done nothing to strengthen the arguments of those who desired, as a military measure, to advance the Indian frontier, and much to verify the forebodings of those who were opposed to that policy; that Russia's advances in Central Asia were not of a nature to endanger the safety of India, and that, however unfriendly her ultimate aims might be, the best way to defeat them was to go into the predicted struggle, as the defenders, not as the destroyers of Afghan independence.

Firm as regarded the policy to which the Indian Government was now directed to give effect, the British Government showed itself conciliatory in matters of detail. Lord Ripon was to keep in view the paramount importance of withdrawing on the earliest suitable occasion; but the choice of the occasion itself, and the nature of the arrangements which the retiring troops were to leave behind them, it left with confidence to the decision of His Excellency in Council, with the sole proviso that, whoever the future ruler of the evacuated territory might be, he should clearly understand that he must rely on his own resources and not look to Her Majesty's Forces for assistance.<sup>2</sup>

In a later Despatch, Lord Hartington expressed the hope that it might be found unnecessary to prolong the occupation of Kandahar

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 1, pp. 89-93.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 3, pp. 1, 2.



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by British forces beyond the winter,<sup>1</sup> and the Government of India decided that the evacuation should begin about the middle of April and notified the Amir that, if he were willing to take over the administration of Southern Afghanistan, he must lose no time in completing his preparations for occupying it.<sup>2</sup> This intimation was highly unwelcome to Abdur Rahman; not that he was unwilling to add Kandahar to his dominions,<sup>3</sup> but because he had not yet consolidated his power at Kabul, and lacked the guns and ammunition without which he could not hope to extend it to a distant province in the teeth of so powerful a rival as Ayub Khan.<sup>4</sup> His representations on this point so far bore fruit that the Commissioner of Peshawar was instructed on the 27th of February to inform him that the ammunition asked for was ready to be made over to his officials,

<sup>1</sup> Strength of force in Kandahar and on Line of Communications throughout the winter of 1880-81 :—

### *Garrison of Kandahar.*

- 1 Battery Royal Horse Artillery.
- 2 „ Field Artillery.
- 1 „ Mountain Guns.
- 1 „ Heavy Guns.
- 1 British Cavalry Regiment.
- 2 Native „ „
- 1 British Infantry „
- 6 Native „ „
- 1 Company Sappers and Miners.

### *Line of Communications.*

- 1 Battery Mountain Guns.
- 1 „ Heavy Guns.
- 4 Native Cavalry Regiments.
- 8 „ Infantry „
- 3 Companies Sappers and Miners.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 5, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> “The kingdom of Kabul without Kandahar was like a head without a nose, or a fort without any gate.” (*Life of Abdur Rahman*, by Sultan Mahomed Khan, Vol. I. p. 208.)

<sup>4</sup> “I have neither any good guns nor ammunition, which may be usefully employed against an enemy, . . . and unless the illustrious British Government helps me with ammunition, I should find myself in a very difficult position.”—Letter from the Amir dated February 10th. See *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 5 p. 68. On the 11th of December he had written:—“The degree and extent of the desolation of the country and the destruction of the materials of the Afghan Empire are such that they cannot be restored and replaced with little money and small funds.” (*Ibid.* p. 13.)

either at Peshawar, or in the Khyber ; and in his reply, though still complaining of the shortness of the notice accorded to him, he wrote that he had set about equipping the necessary force, and hoped that his troops would arrive at Kandahar within the appointed time.

On the 1st of April, the Amir wrote to the Viceroy that the new Governor of Kandahar, Sirdar Mahomed Hashim Khan, escorted by a thousand horsemen, had left Kabul on the 21st of March, followed, on the 24th by two thousand eight hundred infantry, under the command of General Ghulam Hyder Khan, and that it was his intention, as soon as he received news of the arrival of his cavalry, to march himself for Kandahar, with as many troops as he could equip and provide with transport, taking with him "all the tribal chiefs" of Kabul, whose presence might be considered injurious, and leaving only "faithful servants and conscientious officials at Kabul."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst an Afghan force was on its way to Kandahar, transport for bringing back the British garrison of that city was coming up from India, laden with provisions for man and beast ; all camping grounds were being stocked with forage, and big tents pitched at every halting place in the Bolan ; while Major Westmacott was busy securing the goodwill of the tribesmen by promising high prices for food and forage supplied, and undertaking that no foraging parties should enter their villages.

During the months which had elapsed since the raising of the siege of Kandahar, the garrison of that city had been subjected to much ignorant criticism, and the following Farewell Order of its new commander, Major-General R. Hume<sup>2</sup>—Phayre had returned

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 5, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> The Major-General arrived at Kandahar on the 29th of November with the Chief of his Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Little, and his Assistant Quartermaster-General, Major M. J. King-Harman.

Hume was a distinguished officer, but not more distinguished than Phayre ; and after the admirable manner in which the latter had performed the onerous duties that devolved upon him in both phases of the war, he ought not to have been passed over in favour of a man who had taken no part in either campaign.—H. B. H.

to his original appointment of Inspector-General of Communications—was a strong and generous protest against the aspersions cast upon its courage and its discipline :—

“ Before parting with the regiments of the Bombay Army, whom he may not again meet, the Major-General takes this opportunity of publicly recording his opinion that, from his personal experience, there is nothing in the appearance and bearing of any of those regiments to justify the manner in which they have been publicly held up as inferior in soldier-like qualities. Major-General Hume would, with the greatest confidence, command any body of the Bombay troops on active service in the field, were he appointed to do so by higher authority, and feels assured that his confidence in them would not be misplaced.”<sup>1</sup>

The above order was issued on the 12th of April, in the belief that the Third Brigade would start for India the following day, but, delayed by violent storms, it did not march until the 17th. The Second Brigade followed on the 20th, and, on the 21st, General Hume handed over the city with fifty thousand rupees, three thousand rifles, and eighteen field-pieces to Sirdar Mahomed Hashim, who had arrived on the 16th, and accompanied by the Ex-Resident, Colonel St. John, marched with the Cavalry and the First Infantry Brigade for Quetta. With his arrival at that station on the 4th of May, the Second Afghan War, so far as Great Britain and India were concerned, was at an end ; but Afghanistan had still months of civil strife to go through before the unity, which Lord Lytton had made it his object to destroy, could be restored. News from Herat, received prior to the departure of the British troops, had shown that Ayub Khan was not inclined to yield Kandahar to Abdur Rahman without a struggle ; and one of the new Governor's first

<sup>1</sup> “ I was glad to see General Hume's order about the Bombay troops. I expect they were more sinned against than sinning. The best troops in the world will get defeated if under a bad general.” (Extract letter from Sir Charles Macgregor to General Hon. A. E. Hardinge, Commander-in-Chief Bombay Army, dated Simla, June 2nd, 1881.)

acts was to send a cavalry regiment to hold Girishk, strengthening the position a little later with two guns, a second regiment of cavalry and one of infantry. This force, early in June, fell upon Ayub Khan's advanced guard, and, according to advices which St. John reported to Simla, entirely defeated it. Whether the sources from which St. John derived his information were altogether trustworthy, seems doubtful; for, on the 30th of June, he was fairly confident that Ayub Khan would not attempt to leave Herat, and on the 21st of July, he had to telegraph to the Indian Government that that Prince was already three hundred miles from that city, and only a few marches from Girishk.<sup>1</sup> Unwarned by Burrows's defeat, Ghulam Hyder committed the error of advancing to meet the enemy, and when he had concentrated at Girishk, Ayub Khan made a rapid march, crossed the Helmand by a ford lower down the stream, and was in a fair way to capture Kandahar by a *coup de main*, when Abdur Rahman's lieutenant overtook him at Atta Karez. The battle that ensued was long, and, for a time, indecisive. Ayub Khan repeating the tactics which had proved successful at Maiwand, got his cavalry completely round his adversary's right flank and in rear of his baggage, and then made a direct attack on his infantry. Repulsed by a cavalry charge, he brought up reinforcements; at this critical moment, the Ghilzai regiment and the Kandahari Cavalry came over to him; and the engagement ended in a general flight, in which the Amir's troops lost all their guns, baggage, and treasure. The news of the defeat of his Commander-in-Chief brought Abdur Rahman himself into the field. Leaving his eldest son, Habbibula Khan, to represent him at Kabul, he marched for Southern Afghanistan with twelve thousand men; ten thousand tribesmen joining him en route. On his approach, Ayub Khan evacuated Kandahar, which had opened its gates to him after his victory, and took up a strong position on the slopes of the hill above the site of the old

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan* (1881), No. 5, p. 116.

city, with the Ex-Wali's contingent in reserve on its crest. The two forces, which were about equal in strength, met on the 22nd of September; both fought with great fierceness; both were well commanded; and for two hours it was impossible to say to which side victory would incline. Then, the Kabul army's flanks began to fall back, but its centre, led by Abdur Rahman in person, held firm, and the contingent posted on the summit of the hill, detecting signs of weakening in Ayub Khan's troops, went over to the winning side. Taking advantage of the confusion into which this treachery had thrown the enemy, the Amir pressed forward with the whole of his army, and defeated his rival as completely as that rival, two months before, had defeated Ghulam Hyder Khan.

Ayub Khan fled towards Herat; but, before leaving Kabul, Abdur Rahman had sent instructions to Sirdar Kudus Khan, the Governor of Afghan Turkestan, to march at once on that city, and he had taken it by assault on the 4th of September. Deprived of his expected refuge, the fugitive Prince turned aside into Persia, where he remained till 1888, when, after an unsuccessful attempt to bring about a rising against his cousin the Amir, he surrendered to the British Government, and now resides at Murree as a political prisoner at large; whilst his brother Yakub, the Ex-Amir, divides his time between Mussoorie and Dera Dun.

Though in his Despatch of the 11th of November, Lord Hartington had declared that there was no room for compromise between the two absolutely conflicting lines of policy, one or other of which he and his colleagues had had to choose; and though, in his Despatch of the 3rd of December, he had clearly indicated that he regarded the restoration of the entire district of Pishin to Afghanistan as an integral part of the policy which the Government had deliberately adopted, the arguments in favour of its retention ultimately prevailed with him, and it remained a British possession, with consequences to India which will be briefly set forth in a concluding chapter.



## CHAPTER XLI

### Consequences of the War

#### EXTENSION OF THE FRONTIER—ALIENATION OF THE INDEPENDENT TRIBES

HISTORY nowhere presents a closer parallel than that which exists between the causes, conduct, and consequences of the Afghan war of 1838-42, and the causes, conduct, and consequences of the Afghan war of 1878-80. Both had their origin in the fear of Russia, yet neither had Russia for its object. Each was begun under a fatal misconception of its character, cost, and probable duration. Each, though, in intention, directed solely against a Prince, became, in its progress, a struggle with a People. Each ran a long and chequered course, and was marked by incidents little creditable to British honour and British humanity. Each closed with a march which surrounded political failure with a halo of military success, and gave an air of freedom to an inevitable retreat. Each left behind it, to the people of India, a legacy of indebtedness and poverty—to the people of Afghanistan, a legacy of bitter memories and deep distrust of British promises. Each failed of its object—nay, more than failed—for, instead of establishing on the throne of Kabul a sovereign devoted to British interests, the one ended in the restoration of the able Prince to depose whom it had been begun; and the other, in the nomination to the Amirship of the last man on whom, from its own point of view, the choice of the Indian Government should have fallen, because the man apparently most likely to prefer Russia's influence to that of Great Britain.

There was yet another feature in which the later contest was the counterpart of the earlier. Both taught so forcibly the folly of the fears which gave them birth that experience, for a time, silenced misconceptions, and men who had been warm partisans of pressing forward over deserts and mountains in search of that elusive fiction "a scientific frontier," returned to India thankful for the defences with which Nature has richly endowed her. The wisdom so dearly bought may be summed up in the words of five distinguished men, three of whom wrote from contemporary knowledge of the first war, and two out of personal experience of the second.

"Triumph you may; confident you may be, as I am, in the gallantry of your troops; but when, through their gallantry, the victory has been gained and you have succeeded, then will come your difficulties."<sup>1</sup>

"The whole question (of the occupation of Afghanistan) is one of commissariat; that of commissariat, one of means of transport."<sup>2</sup>

"Afghanistan merits the character given to Spain by the first Henry of France: Invade with a large force, and you are destroyed by starvation; invade with a small force, and you are overwhelmed by a hostile people."<sup>3</sup>

"It has always appeared to me that, however confident our officers in those days were of the sound policy which led to the expedition, a large majority of those who survived it, or who have studied that question since the war in Afghanistan . . . have deprecated very strongly an advance into that country, or any very intimate interference with its affairs. . . . It could not supply the food for such an army as we should require there, and therefore its supplies must come from a distance. It can, indeed, scarcely feed its own population, however hardy and abstemious it is known to be. . . . To endeavour

<sup>1</sup> Duke of Wellington in 1839.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Letter to Lord Ellenborough in 1842.

<sup>3</sup> Major-General Sir Henry Durand's *History of the First Afghan War*.

to hold such a country firmly, to try to control such a people, is to court misfortune and calamity. The Afghan will bear poverty, insecurity of life, but he will not tolerate foreign rule. The moment he has a chance he will rebel. His nature, his religion, the habits of his life, all tend to foster feelings of independence and hardihood.”<sup>1</sup>

“For my part I think we shall make a very great mistake if we annex any considerable part of Afghanistan. It is a wretched country, and could not support an army for any length of time ; and I am quite sure that, with India at our back, we could not keep up a force of 20,000 men in one place” ; and, “I must say that the people who said that, when once we gave up our frontier, there was no telling where we are to stop, seem to have prophesied rightly.”<sup>2</sup>

“It may not be very flattering to our *amour propre*, but I feel sure I am right when I say that the less the Afghans see of us, the less they will dislike us. Should Russia, in future years, attempt to conquer Afghanistan, or invade India through it, we should have a better chance of attaching the Afghans to our interests if we avoid all interference with them in the meantime. . . . The longer and more difficult the line of communication is, the more numerous and greater the obstacles which Russia would have to overcome ; and, so far from shortening one mile of the road, I would let the web of difficulties extend to the very mouth of the Khyber Pass.”<sup>3</sup>

The truths contained in these quotations have double value as being equally true for both of Afghanistan's neighbours. Where India cannot subsist an army of twenty thousand men, neither can Russia ; if it would be madness in the Russian Government to entangle itself in a web of difficulties in the hope of shaking Great Britain's hold upon India, it will always be madness in an Indian Government to entangle itself in a similar web for the purpose of weakening Russia's

<sup>1</sup> Minute by Sir John Lawrence in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Sir D. Stewart—Kandahar, in 1879 and 1880.

<sup>3</sup> Sir F. Roberts—Kabul, in 1880.

authority in Central Asia. To a Russian, as to a British army, would be given the choice between perishing of starvation or at the hands of a hostile people. The difficulties which Wellington foresaw as awaiting a victorious British army on its arrival at Kabul, would be greater, not less, for a victorious Russian army on entering that city; because, for the latter even more than for the former, the question of how to maintain itself there would be one of commissariat, and that of commissariat one of transport.

And as, in one direction, these dicta apply equally to Russia and to India, so, in another, they are equally true of the subjects of the Amir and the Independent Pathan Tribes; for, of the latter also, it may be said that they will bear poverty and insecurity of life, but they will not tolerate foreign rule; that the moment they have a chance they will rebel; and that the best way of attaching them to our interests in the hour of a Russian invasion—admitting that such an invasion were possible—is to avoid all interference with them in the meantime. That policy of non-interference with the border tribes steadily pursued by Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo, and Lord Northbrook, was broken by the war. With three British armies trying to force their way to the heart of Afghanistan, it was impossible to avoid coming into collision with the tribes whose territories they violated; and the numerous punitive expeditions which grew out of these collisions, aroused fierce resentment in the breasts of despoiled and homeless men. Time, however, would have softened that resentment if, on the cessation of hostilities, the Indian Government had reverted to a policy to the results of which, writing in October, 1876, Lepel Griffin, then Secretary to the Punjab Government, could bear the following fine testimony:—

“The frontier tribes are slowly, but surely, losing their suspicion of and dislike to the British Government. The change is gradual; but if we look back twenty, or even ten, years we see how substantial has been the progress made. They are still savage, fanatical, and

ignorant, but they have learned to believe in the fairness of our intentions, and so far appreciate our rule that they leave their hills in large numbers, abandon their predatory life, and settle quietly in British territory.”<sup>1</sup>

Looking back over the twenty-eight years that have elapsed since the evacuation of Afghanistan, the reverse of the above picture presents itself to the eyes of the inquirer. Slowly, but surely, one tribe after another—Kakars, Zobites, Waziris, Urakzais, Afridis, Mohmands, and Yusufzais—have come to regard the Indian Government with ever-growing distrust and dislike; to disbelieve utterly in the fairness of the intentions of a neighbour which, with or without pretext, has not scrupled to penetrate deep into their territories, and makes no secret of its determination to bring them under its authority. The one fatal consequence of the war of 1878 was just this change of policy towards the border tribes, and it is directly traceable to an unfortunate concession made by the Gladstone Cabinet to views that it did not share. Had Lord Hartington fallen back at the southern extremity of India's North-West frontier as completely as he fell back at its northern extremity, a fresh advance, on different lines, beginning *ab ovo*, would have presented itself to public opinion in its true magnitude, and have met with wide discussion and weighty opposition; but the annexation

<sup>1</sup> The impartial testimony of the *Statements of Moral and Material Progress in India* confirm Griffin's report.

1873-74. "The North-West Frontier is reported never to have been so tranquil since the annexation of the Punjab."

1874-75. "A continuous policy of conciliation, a growing trade, and a wholesome fear of speedy chastisement for hostile acts, have combined to make the tribes amenable, and to render the frontier districts almost as tranquil as those of the interior."

1875-76. "The Punjab Frontier from Hazara to Sind was, with one exception, peaceable and orderly throughout the year, and more so than in any other year since the annexation of the province."

1876-77. "If the whole condition of the border from Hazara to Sind be considered, it will be found that in no year since the annexation of the Punjab has the border been generally more tranquil."



of Quetta and Pishin, and the creation of outposts in Kakar territory to protect the Harnai railway, made possible that "insidious creeping over the country like a mist" so indignantly repudiated by Sir William Mansfield when Commander-in-Chief in India. The fruits of this method so far have been one big war and many little wars; the locating a number of small garrisons in inaccessible regions, in the midst of hostile peoples;<sup>1</sup> a large addition to India's military forces; a big increase in her military and political charges; the concentration of a large part of her army within sight of the north-west frontier; and the creation of a fresh school of alarmists, even wilder in their visions of coming evil than their predecessors—men who are never weary of predicting the triumphant march of Russian armies over passes compared with which the Khyber and the Bolan are open and level roads.<sup>2</sup> It would be giving these prophets too little credit for a knowledge of the profession to which most of them belong, to assume that they have faith in their own predictions. No experienced soldier can believe that a Russian force, encumbered with heavy artillery, long

<sup>1</sup> The establishment of such outposts was condemned in advance by Sir E. Hamley:—"It appears to be believed that posts pushed up the passes would lessen the chances of future contests with the unruly hill-tribes. That they are unruly would appear an excellent reason for keeping them in our front rather than in our rear. Posts separated by such distances and such inaccessible country, can exercise no influence over the inhabitants between; on the contrary, we should thus be offering them new and potent means of molesting us." (Extract from Lecture delivered on the 13th of December, 1878. *Journal of the United Service Institution*, Vol. XXII. No. XCVIII. p. 1037.)

<sup>2</sup> "In forming an idea of a march in force through such passes, it may assist us to remember that an English Army Corps, say 24,000 strong with artillery, extends with its combatant forces only, on a European road about 16 miles in length, and with its *trains* 27 miles. Allowing only a slight increase for the nature of the road, the combatants of a similar force in the pass would stretch 18 miles, the total with trains 30. Thus, when the head of the combatant column issued from the pass, its rear would be nearly two days' march behind; and considering the host of animals required for the necessary supplies on such an expedition, the rear of the trains could then scarcely be less than six days behind the head of the column." (*Ibid.* p. 1029.)

transport trains, and hosts of followers, will ever enter India *via* Gilghit or Chitral, nor, yet, that a feigned attack by either of those routes to cover a real invasion by one of the older roads, can carry panic into India, and disorganize the Government's plans for her defence; but, by persuading others that such a danger exists, the new Forward Party has been enabled to exalt the military at the expense of the civil power, to tighten its grip on the public purse, and so to organize and distribute the Indian Army that a third advance on Kabul and Kandahar can be made to appear a simple undertaking compared to the second and the first. To appear, not to be, a simple undertaking. A third advance on those cities will mean a third Afghan war, and a third Afghan war will prove more costly and more dangerous than either of its forerunners—more costly, because it will have for its object the permanent occupation of Afghanistan; more dangerous, because the Afghans are better armed than when they narrowly missed annihilating Roberts at Kabul, and defeating Stewart at Ahmed Khel; because the Pathan element in the Native army is stronger than when the rifles of the 29th Punjab Infantry warned the defenders of the Spin Gawai Kotal of the approach of a British column; and because the India of to-day is a less trustworthy base from which to engage in a war of conquest, than was the India of 1838, or 1878. A national Government, embarking on the most indefensible of wars, can always count on the blind support of the majority of its countrymen; an alien Government appeals in vain to the passions and prejudices of its subjects. The former Afghan wars had no national enthusiasm behind them; the war of the future will be waged in the teeth of national condemnation. The educated Native knows that India, with her land frontier triply guarded by river, desert, and mountain has no reason to fear foreign invasion; and no sophistry can convince him that the Scientific Frontier of the Forward Party will add to his security or fail to add to his burdens; and it must not be forgotten that the educated Native has to-day greater opportunities of influencing

his uneducated countrymen than he had seventy, or even thirty, years ago.

No Secretary of State, no Viceroy has ever pretended that wars of aggression can be rendered popular with the Indian people ; but in the Despatch which closed Lord Lawrence's career, that great statesman laid down, for all time, the antecedent conditions on which India's foreign Government can enjoy security in the face of a threatened invasion :—

Previous abstinence from entanglement at either Kabul, Kandahar, or any similar outpost ; a compact, highly equipped and disciplined army, on which full reliance can be placed ; the contentment, if not the attachment, of the masses of the people ; a sense of security of title and possession in the minds of the Chiefs and Native aristocracy ; the construction of material works calculated to enhance the comfort of the people, whilst adding to its own political and military strength ; the husbanding of the nation's finances and the multiplying and consolidating of its resources ; quiet preparation for contingencies, which, in India, statesmen should never disregard ; and such steady avoidance of all conduct that could invite foreign aggression, or stir up restless spirits to domestic revolt, as would inspire its subjects and neighbours with full confidence in the rectitude and honesty of its intentions.

On such broad foundations something greater may be achieved than mere immunity from panic in the face of danger threatening from without—namely, the creation of a strong and prosperous India, loyal to the connection to which she owes her unity ; but they can never be laid whilst money which should be left in the people's pockets, or spent on reproductive works, is wasted on fortifications and strategic railways, the maintenance of an army greatly in excess of its legitimate strength, and the upkeep of outposts which serve no purpose save to irritate and provoke the tribes whom they are supposed to control. Political reforms mock a nation's hopes so long as material conditions

remain unimproved ; and because Militarism and Poverty always have been, and always will be, indissolubly allied, the dearest wish of every lover of England and India must be to create in both countries a Forward Party which shall take as its watchword—Progress founded on Peace.

FINIS.

## APPENDIX

### Casualty List of British Officers during the War

#### KILLED

1. Major A. D. Anderson, 23rd Bengal Pioneers.  
Lieutenant F. C. C. Angelo, 31st Punjab Infantry.  
Lieutenant F. M. Barclay, 45th Bengal Infantry. (Mortally wounded.)  
2nd Lieutenant H. J. O. Barr, 66th Foot.
5. Major Wigram Battye, Corps of Guides.  
Major H. H. Birch, 27th Punjab Infantry.  
Major G. F. Blackwood, Royal Horse Artillery.  
Brigadier-General H. F. Brooke, Commanding 2nd Infantry Brigade, Kandahar Field Force.  
Lieutenant-Colonel F. Brownlow, C.B., 72nd Highlanders.
10. Captain S. G. Butson, 9th Lancers.  
Major Sir P. Louis N. Cavagnari, K.C.B.  
Lieutenant R. T. Chute, 66th Foot.  
Lieutenant-Colonel R. S. Cleland, 9th Lancers. (Mortally wounded.)  
Lieutenant Duncan Cole, 30th Bombay Infantry.
15. Major John Cook, V.C., 5th Gurkhas. (Mortally wounded.)  
Captain G. M. Cruikshank, Royal Engineers.  
Captain F. J. Cullen, 66th Foot.  
Captain J. Dundas, V.C., Royal Engineers.  
Lieutenant T. O. FitzGerald, 27th Punjab Infantry.
20. Lieutenant St. J. W. Forbes, 92nd Highlanders.  
Lieutenant O. E. S. Forbes, 14th Bengal Lancers.  
Captain St. J. T. Frome, 72nd Highlanders.  
Lieutenant C. H. Gaisford, 72nd Highlanders.  
Lieutenant-Colonel James Galbraith, 66th Foot.
25. Captain E. S. Garratt, 66th Foot.  
Captain F. T. Goad, 5th Hyderabad Contingent. (Mortally wounded.)  
Chaplain Rev. G. M. Gordon, Church Missionary Society.  
Lieutenant W. R. P. Hamilton, V.C., Corps of Guides.  
Lieutenant Edward Hardy, Royal Horse Artillery.



30. Lieutenant C. J. R. Hearsey, 9th Lancers.  
 Captain P. C. Heath, Brigade-Major, 1st Brigade, Kandahar Field Force.  
 Lieutenant T. Rice Henn, Royal Engineers.  
 Lieutenant C. W. Hinde, 1st Bombay Grenadiers.  
 Lieutenant A. Honywood, 66th Foot.
35. Mr. W. Jenkyns, C.I.E., Civil Service, Political Officer.  
 Lieutenant W. N. Justice, 30th Bombay Infantry.  
 Surgeon A. H. Kelly, Bengal Medical Department.  
 Captain J. A. Kelso, Royal Artillery.  
 Lieutenant F. G. Kinloch, 5th Bengal Cavalry.
40. Lieutenant G. H. Lumsden, 8th Bengal Cavalry.  
 Lieutenant Hector MacLaine, Royal Horse Artillery.  
 Captain W. H. McMath, 66th Foot.  
 2nd Lieutenant E. S. Marsh, 2-7th Fusiliers.  
 Lieutenant C. A. Montanaro, Royal Artillery. (Mortally wounded.)
45. Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Newport, 28th Bombay Infantry.  
 Lieutenant C. Nugent, Royal Engineers.  
 2nd Lieutenant W. R. Olivey, 66th Foot.  
 Lieutenant E. G. Osborne, Royal Horse Artillery.  
 Lieutenant W. C. Owen, 3rd Bombay Cavalry.
50. Lieutenant E. Palmer, Bengal Commissariat Department. (Mortally wounded.)  
 Captain C. F. Powell, 5th Gurkhas. (Mortally wounded.)  
 Lieutenant M. E. Rayner, 66th Foot.  
 Lieutenant T. J. O'D. Renny, 4th Punjab Infantry. (Mortally wounded.)  
 Major W. Reynolds, 3rd Sind Horse.
55. Lieutenant W. P. Ricardo, 9th Lancers.  
 Captain W. Roberts, 66th Foot.  
 Captain E. D. Shafto, Royal Artillery.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Shewell, Deputy Commissary-General. (Mortally wounded.)  
 Captain H. F. Showers, 1st Punjab Infantry.
60. Captain H. F. Smith, 30th Bombay Infantry.  
 Surgeon W. B. Smyth, M.B., C.S.I.  
 Captain N. J. Spens, 72nd Highlanders.  
 Lieutenant F. C. Stayner, 19th Bombay Infantry.  
 Captain E. Straton, 2-22nd Foot.
65. 2nd Lieutenant B. S. Thurlow, 51st Foot.  
 Major R. J. Le Poer Trench, 19th Bombay Infantry.  
 Major T. B. Vandeleur, 2-7th Fusiliers. (Mortally wounded.)  
 Major S. J. Waudby, 19th Bombay Infantry.  
 Lieutenant C. G. Whitby, 1st Bombay Grenadiers.
70. Lieutenant H. V. Willis, Royal Artillery.  
 Lieutenant N. C. Wiseman, 1-17th Foot.

2nd Lieutenant F. P. F. Wood, 2-7th Fusiliers.  
 Lieutenant O. B. Wood, Transport Department.  
 Lieutenant I. D. Wright, Royal Artillery.

*Total Killed—74.*

## WOUNDED

1. Lieutenant-Colonel H. S. Anderson, 1st Bombay Infantry (Grenadiers).  
 Lieutenant L. S. Hyde Baker, 3rd Punjab Cavalry.  
 Major S. D. Barrow, 10th Bengal Lancers.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel A. Battye, 2nd Gurkhas.
5. Captain F. D. Battye, Corps of Guides.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Broome, 2nd Punjab Cavalry.  
 Lieutenant A. M. Caulfield, 66th Berks Regiment.  
 Lieutenant N. F. F. Chamberlain, Central India Horse.  
 Lieutenant D. Chesney, 23rd Pioneers.
10. Major J. J. Scott Chisholme, 9th Lancers.  
 Captain W. Conolly, 2nd Battalion 7th Royal Fusiliers.  
 Lieutenant W. Cook, 3rd Sikhs.  
 Major R. Corbett, E-3 Royal Artillery.  
 Surgeon A. Duncan, M.D., Indian Medical Department.
15. Lieutenant E. J. N. Fasken, 3rd Sikhs.  
 Lieutenant C. H. Fergusson, 72nd Highlanders.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel A. FitzHugh, 5th Gurkhas.  
 Captain N. P. Fowell, E-B Royal Horse Artillery.  
 Lieutenant C. F. Gambier, 5th Punjab Cavalry.
20. Captain A. J. Garrett, Hyderabad Contingent.  
 Captain D. F. Gordon, 92nd Gordon Highlanders.  
 Lieutenant S. D. Gordon, 19th Bengal Lancers.  
 Colonel Sir H. H. Gough, V.C.  
 Captain J. Grant, 1st Bombay Infantry (Grenadiers).
25. Captain F. L. Graves, 6-11 Royal Artillery.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Griffiths, 3rd Sikhs.  
 Captain C. H. Hamilton, Royal Artillery.  
 Captain T. Harris, 66th Berks Regiment.  
 Lieutenant H. R. L. Holmes, 45th Sikhs.
30. Major J. S. Iredell, 30th Bombay Infantry.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel J. Lawson, 59th Foot.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel G. Luck, 15th Hussars.  
 Lieutenant H. B. Lynch, 66th Berks Regiment.  
 Major J. A. F. H. Stewart-Mackenzie, 9th Lancers.
35. Colonel J. H. P. Malcolmson, 3rd Sind Horse.  
 Surgeon-Major J. Martin, Army Medical Department.  
 Lieutenant H. S. Massy, 19th Bengal Lancers.

- Captain M. Mayne, 3rd Bombay Cavalry.  
 Surgeon C. J. McCartie, M.D., Indian Medical Department.
40. Captain S. A. Menzies, 92nd Gordon Highlanders.  
 Lieutenant S. C. H. Monro, 72nd Highlanders.  
 Lieutenant A. M. Monteith, 3rd Sind Horse.  
 Major H. C. Morse, 8th Bombay Infantry.  
 Lieutenant J. Burn-Murdoch, Royal Engineers.
45. Captain R. H. Murray, 72nd Highlanders.  
 Colonel T. R. Nimmo, 28th Bombay Infantry.  
 Captain J. V. Nugent, 51st Light Infantry.  
 Surgeon C. W. Owen, Indian Medical Department.  
 Captain A. J. Poole, 67th Regiment.
50. Surgeon-Major A. F. Preston, M.B., Army Medical Department.  
 Captain A. J. F. Reid, 29th Punjab Infantry.  
 Lieutenant J. H. E. Reid, 3rd Bombay Cavalry.  
 Lieutenant-Colonel F. F. Rowcroft, 4th Gurkhas.  
 Lieutenant H. W. Seymour, 16th Bombay Infantry.
55. Major J. B. Slater, 2nd Sikhs.  
 Surgeon A. K. Stewart, Poona Horse.  
 Lieutenant D. W. Stewart, 92nd Gordon Highlanders.  
 Lieutenant C. J. L. Stuart, 2nd Punjab Cavalry.  
 Lieutenant L. Sunderland, 72nd Highlanders.
60. Major E. T. Thackeray, V.C., Royal Engineers.  
 Lieutenant F. J. Tobin, 23rd Regiment Bombay Infantry.  
 Deputy Surgeon-General S. C. Townsend.  
 Captain C. J. W. Trower, 9th Lancers.  
 Captain D. M. D. Waterfield, Royal Artillery.
65. Major R. J. Watson, 1st Battalion Worcester Regiment.  
 Lieutenant S. Watson, 59th Foot.  
 Captain H. L. Wells, Royal Engineers.  
 Captain G. W. Willock, 3rd Bengal Cavalry.  
 Lieutenant H. St. Leger Wood, 15th Foot.
70. Colonel P. S. Yorke, 19th Bengal Lancers.  
 Captain C. Young, 5th Punjab Infantry.  
 Lieutenant E. A. Young, 19th Bengal Lancers.

*Total Wounded—72.*

#### DIED FROM EXPOSURE OR DISEASE

1. Lieutenant P. E. Anderson, 25th Punjab Infantry.  
 Surgeon-Major G. Atkinson, M.B., Army Medical Department.  
 Captain W. B. Barker, 10th Hussars.  
 Major H. G. Becher, 11th Bengal Infantry.
5. Captain John Becke, 21st Bombay Infantry.  
 Lieutenant W. H. Bishop, 2-11th Foot.

- Surgeon-Major R. H. Bolton, Army Medical Department.  
Lieutenant A. Burlton-Bennet, 10th Bengal Lancers.  
Lieutenant J. F. M. Campbell, 29th Bombay Infantry.
10. Captain C. A. Carthew, 16th Bengal Cavalry.  
Captain D. T. Chisholm, 59th Foot.  
Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. J. Clarke, 72nd Highlanders.  
Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Collins, 2-60th Rifles.  
Lieutenant-Colonel G. B. Crispin, 4th Bombay Rifles.
15. Captain E. W. H. Crofton, 4-60th Rifles.  
Lieutenant R. E. L. Dacres, Royal Artillery.  
Lieutenant-Colonel A. G. Daubeny, 2-7th Fusiliers.  
Lieutenant G. G. Dawes, 1st Bengal Cavalry.  
Lieutenant A. E. Dobson, Royal Engineers.
20. Lieutenant-Colonel H. Fellowes, 32nd Punjab Pioneers.  
Captain J. H. Gamble, 1-17th Foot.  
Major J. Godson, 4th Madras Infantry.  
Surgeon H. A. C. Gray, M.B., C.M., Bengal Medical Department.  
Captain G. J. Hare, 22nd Punjab Infantry.
25. Sub-Lieutenant F. H. Harford, 10th Hussars. (Drowned.)  
Lieutenant W. F. Hennell, 1st Punjab Cavalry.  
Surgeon A. C. Keith, M.B., Army Medical Department.  
Surgeon-Major H. Kelsall, Army Medical Department.  
Lieutenant S. E. L. Lendrum, Royal Artillery.
30. 2nd Lieutenant E. D. Los, 1-25th Foot.  
Captain C. S. Morrison, 14th Bengal Lancers.  
Lieutenant A. R. Murray, Corps of Guides.  
Lieutenant-Colonel G. Nicholletts, 29th Bombay Infantry.  
Colonel J. J. O'Bryen, 22nd Punjab Infantry.
35. Major C. V. Oliver, 66th Foot.  
Lieutenant Lord Ossulston, 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade.  
Captain E. W. Perry, 40th Foot.  
Deputy Surgeon-General J. H. Porter, Army Medical Department.  
Lieutenant Brownlow Poulter, Royal Engineers.
40. Major L. A. Powys, 59th Foot.  
Captain J. J. Preston, 4th Rifle Brigade.  
Captain R. B. Reed, 1-12th Foot.  
Lieutenant J. T. Rice, Royal Engineers.  
Lieutenant S. W. T. Roberts, 27th Punjab Infantry.
45. Lieutenant H. R. Ross, Royal Artillery.  
Captain A. P. Samuells, 32nd Punjab Pioneers.  
Captain E. W. Samuells, Bengal Staff Corps.  
Captain T. a'B. Sargent, 78th Highlanders.  
Major L. Smith, 3rd Gurkhas.
50. Mr. D. B. Sinclair, C.S., Political Officer.  
Lieutenant H. H. S. Spoor, 1-25th Foot.  
Lieutenant-Colonel R. G. T. Stevenson, Poona Horse.

- Captain S. A. Swinley, 11th Bengal Lancers.  
 Brigadier-General J. A. Tytler, C.B., V.C., Commanding Zaimukht Expedition.
55. Lieutenant E. P. Ventris, 3rd Buffs.  
 Surgeon-Major J. Wallace, M.A., M.D., M.R.C.S.  
 Surgeon J. E. Walsh, M.D., Bengal Medical Department.  
 2nd Lieutenant E. H. Watson, 1-17th Foot.  
 Surgeon G. Watson, M.B., Bengal Medical Department.
60. Captain A. A. Weighall, 2-11th Foot.  
 Lieutenant F. Whittuck, 1st Bombay Grenadiers.  
 Captain F. H. Winterbotham, Madras Sappers.  
 Surgeon-Major J. H. Wright, M.R.C.S., Army Medical Department.  
 Lieutenant G. M. Yaldwyn, 2-6th Foot.

*Total Died—64.*

#### ABSTRACT

<i>Killed</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	74
<i>Wounded</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	72
<i>Died</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	64
<i>Total Casualties</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	210

There exists no official record of the exact numbers killed, wounded, and invalided in the War; but Major G. J. Younghusband in his *Indian Frontier Warfare* puts them down at fifty thousand, "approximately equivalent to the entire force that was in the field at any one time," and this estimate is probably not exaggerated.



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